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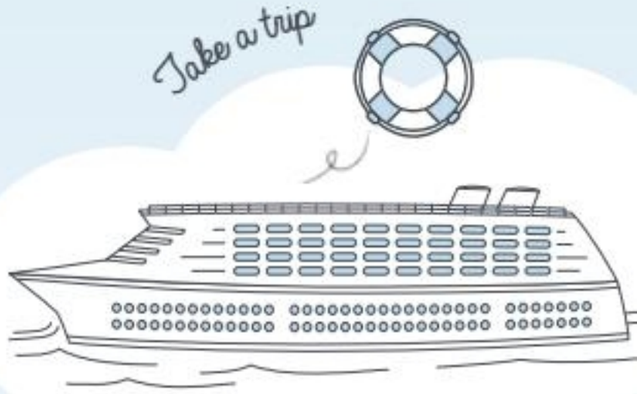

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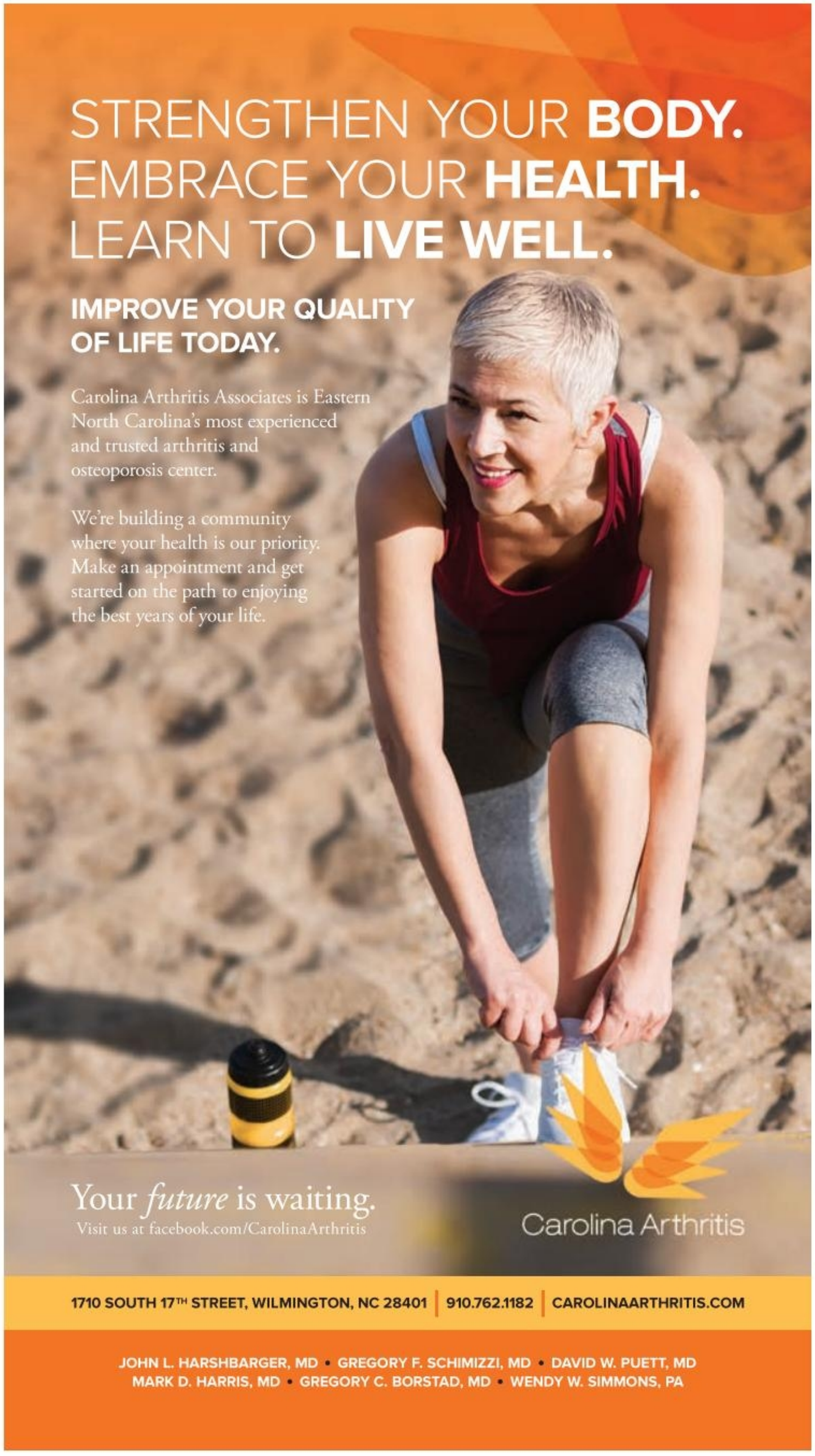
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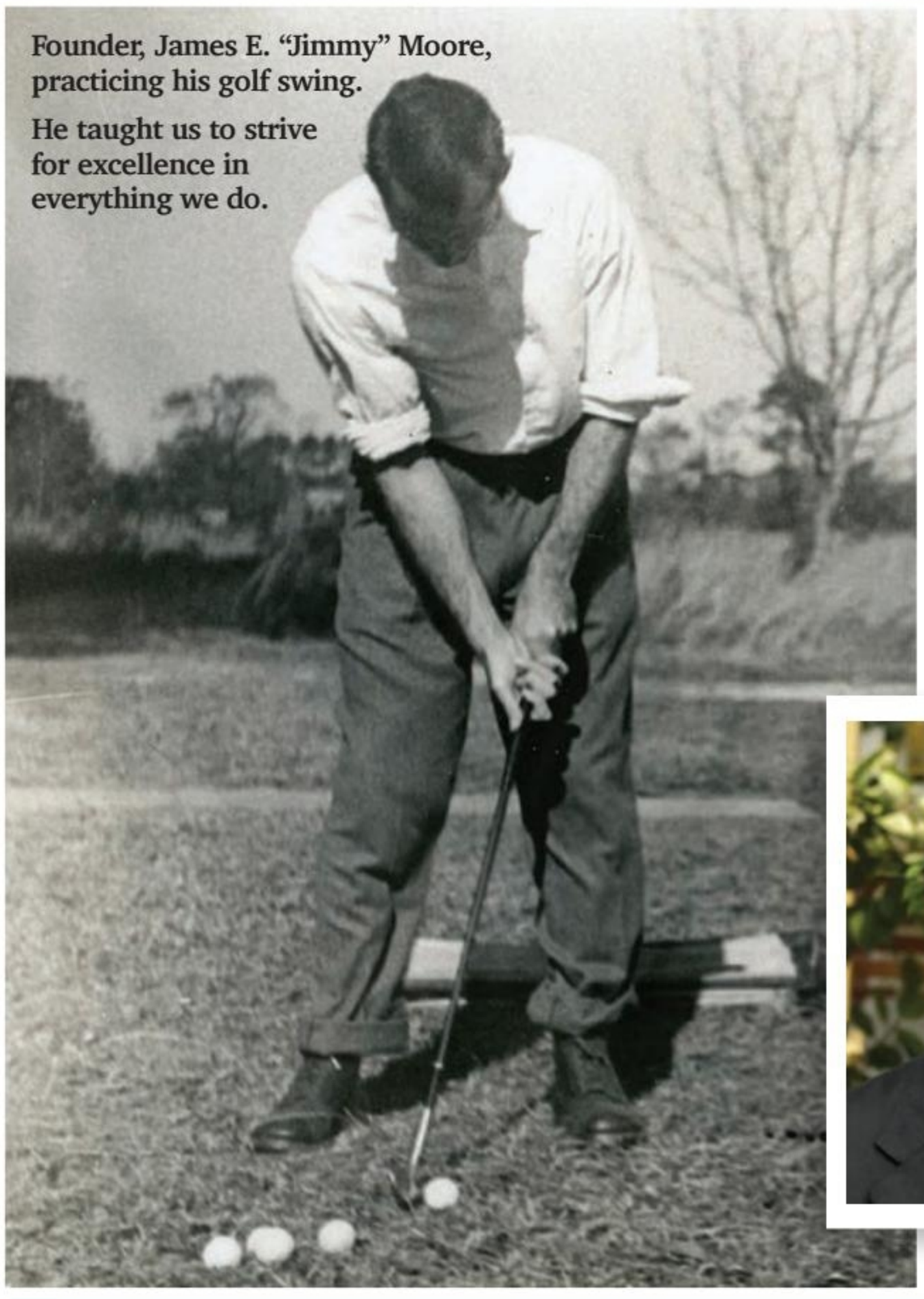

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Going Home

By Jim Dodson

Half a century ago this month, I was chased off the golf course of my dad's club in Greensboro for losing my cool and burying a putter in the flesh of an innocent green during my first 18 holes ever on a regulation course. To compound the crime, I was playing with my dad and his two regular golf pals at the time, Bill Mims and Alex the Englishman.

After being shown how to properly repair the damaged green, my straight-arrow old man calmly insisted that I walk all the way back to the clubhouse in order to report my crime to Green Valley's famously profane and colorfully terrifying head professional, who upon hearing what I'd done removed the eternally smoldering stogie from the right-hand corner of his mouth long enough to banish me from the golf course until midsummer.

This felt like a death sentence because I had been preparing for this day for well over a year, wearing out local par-3 courses and modest public courses in preparation for stepping up to a "real" golf course with my dad and his buddies. The idea was that I should become reasonably proficient at playing but — more important — learn the rules and proper etiquette of the ancient game.

Painful as it was, this day, it changed my life.

The next afternoon after church, a postcard Sunday in early May, my dad drove me 90 minutes south from the Piedmont to the Sandhills to show me famed Pinehurst No. 2, Donald Ross' masterpiece, where I saw golfers walking along perfect fairways and actually heard a hymn being chimed through the stately longleaf pines.

True to form, my upbeat old man — whom I called "Opti the Mystic" owing to his relentless good cheer and penchant for quoting long-dead sages when you least expected it — calmly pointed out: "That golf course, Sport, is one of the most famous in the world. But you'll never get to play there until you learn to properly behave on the golf course." He added, "If you ever do, you'll be surprised how far this wonderful game can take you."

I was crestfallen as we drove on past the famous course. But a few miles down Midland Road we turned into a small hotel that had its own golf course, the Mid Pines Inn and Golf Club. "Let's step inside," my dad casually suggested. "I'll introduce you to an old friend."

His old friend was a man named Ernie Boros, the brother of Julius Boros, the U.S. Open winner I'd recently tagged along after at the Greater Greensboro Open whenever I wasn't shadowing my hero, Arnold Palmer.

Ernie Boros couldn't have been nicer, offering me a free visor along with the news that his famous brother Julius happened to be having lunch at that moment in the dining room. He graciously offered to introduce us.

The encounter was brief but warm. The great man asked me how I liked golf and commented that if I continued to grow in the game, the odds were good that I would meet the most amazing people on Earth and play some incredible golf courses. Then he offered to sign my new visor.

"Wasn't that something?" said Opti as we wandered out to look at the 18th hole of Mid Pines, which that day, wreathed with dogwoods and banks of azalea just past bloom stage, looked every bit as magical as Augusta National did on television. "You just never know who you'll meet in golf. Tell you what," he added almost as an afterthought, "if you think you can knock off the shenanigans, maybe we can play the golf course here today."

And with that, I finally got to play my first full championship golf course.

It only took another two decades (and my mom fessing up) for me to realize that the whole affair was simply a sweet setup by my funny and philosophical old man — a classic Opti the Mystic exercise to illustrate the point of learning how to live life with joy, gratitude and optimism, not to mention respect for a game older than the U.S. Constitution.

And here's the most amazing thing of all. Both men were correct in their assessments of golf's social and metaphysical properties. If I'd been less awestruck and a little more tuned into the universe, perhaps I'd have heard echoes of the same message coming from Opti and Julius Boros — that the ancient game could take you amazing places and introduce you to some of the finest people on Earth.

A fuller account of this teenage epiphany opens the pages of *The Range Bucket List*, my new — and possibly final — golf book that reaches bookstores May 9. Fittingly, the memoir appears almost 50 years to the day after that life-altering weekend.

In a nutshell, the book is simply my love letter to an old game that, true

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to my old man's words, took me much farther than I could ever have imagined it could, deeply enriched — and possibly even saved — my life.

It even eventually brought me home again to North Carolina.

Not long after turning 30, taking the advice of Opti to "write about things you love," I withdrew from consideration for a long-hoped-for journalism job in Washington to relocate to a trout stream in Vermont where I went to work for *Yankee* magazine as that iconic publication's first senior writer (and Southerner), a move which helped shape the values of this magazine and opened an unexpected door to the world of golf.

The Range Bucket List is a grateful Everyman's love poem to the finest game on Earth . . .

This move in turn led to *Final Rounds*, a surprise bestseller about taking Opti back to England and Scotland to play the golf courses where he fell hard for the game as a homesick soldier prior to D-Day. My dad was dying of cancer at the time. It was indeed our final golf trip.

Among other surprises, the book prompted Arnold and Winnie Palmer to get in touch, inviting me to spend two years living and traveling with them as we crafted Arnold's own best-selling memoir, *A Golfer's Life*. An enduring friendship and nine books followed, four of which were golf-related, including the authorized biography of Ben Hogan and a biography of America's own great triumvirate of Sam Snead, Ben Hogan and Byron Nelson.

In simplest terms, *The Range Bucket List* is a grateful Everyman's love poem to the finest game on Earth, tales I've never been able to tell until now about my long and fortunate journey through golf, stories about Arnold and Winnie Palmer, John Updike, Glenna Vare, amateur great Bill Campbell, Herbert Warren Wind, LPGA icon Jackie Pung, the greatest Scottish woman on Earth, a second chance at marriage, the power of a best friend, and how golf brought me home again. There's even an oddly revealing account a peculiar afternoon of golf spent with a guy named Trump.

I hope those who enjoy my books will find this tale amusingly human, perhaps even reminding

them of their own travels through the game of life and their love affair with a grand old game. Every golfer worth his salt, after all, keeps a Range Bucket List. And everyone's list is different.

And speaking of *Salt*, this book basically came together in my mind over the past three years as I drove the back roads of the state, triangulating between the Sandhills, Greensboro and Wilmington, where the newest of our three sister arts and culture magazines was coming to life in a city I hold very dear.

Wilmington is where my dad found a job at the *Star News* after he lost his little newspaper in Mississippi in 1958 — the place I attended kindergarten at St. Paul's Church on Market Street, learned to read and swim in the "Little Lagoon" not far from Faircloth's Restaurant near the bridge to Wrightsville Beach. For more than two decades we faithfully returned for the annual Azalea Festival and spent summers at the Hanover Seaside Club on Wrightsville Beach. The first golf course I ever set foot on was the City of Wilmington's splendid municipal golf course, a Donald Ross gem dating from 1926, where my dad used to play on Saturdays with his best friend, Bob Tilden.

It seems sweetly providential that *The Range Bucket List* comes out the month the Wells Fargo Championship returns championship professional golf to the Port City — the month I was tossed off my father's golf course in Greensboro half a century ago and laid eyes on Pinehurst for the very first time.

Wilmington, after all, was where my late friend, Arnold Palmer, captured one of his early and most important titles, nipping his best friend, Dow Finsterwald, by a stroke at the venerable Cape Fear Country Club to win the 1957 Azalea Open.

Greensboro's beloved GGO tournament — now the superbly orchestrated Wyndham Championship in August — was where he always had his closest friends in the galleries (but sadly never managed to win). And Pinehurst is where Arnold's own father took him as a hotheaded teen to learn the "higher values" of the game. "Anyone who loves golf," The King told me more than once, "is a true son or daughter of the game."

Arnold Palmer, by the way, was the first name on my teenage Range Bucket List.

When I went to see him in Latrobe a few weeks before he passed away last September, I took him the latest copies of our three sister magazines, *O.Henry*, *Salt* and *PineStraw*.

"These are beautiful," he told me. "Those are wonderful places, all very dear to me. I'm glad you finally managed to get home."

Contact Editor Jim Dodson at jim@thepilot.com.

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SaltWorks

Come Hungry!

Lowdown and Derby

Get the step stool because you're going to need to reach far and high in your closet to get your biggest hat for the derby. Gents, buy a bow tie or better yet, a seersucker suit and a porkpie hat – the better to sashay down for some Southern eats and kickin' mint juleps at the Bellamy Mansion for our favorite event of the Wilmington Wine & Food Festival, the Bourbon & Derby Cocktail party. Mixologists will vie for your vote for best cocktail at the end of the evening (if you can remember by then). Friday, May 12, 6–9:30 p.m. Tickets: $60

Ain't It Grand(e)?

OK, so maybe our favorite is the grande dame, 'Forks & Corks tasting. We are suckers for small bites. When paired with over 150 wines, it becomes just like the beginning of *Alice in Wonderland* at the bottom of the rabbit-hole with all those boxes marked "Eat Me" and vials "Drink Me"; some of us would've never made it past that room to Wonderland. Saturday, May 13, 2–5 p.m. Tickets: $70–90

Keep on Truckin'

Fancy food trucks all in a row, champagne spritzers with nowhere to go? Down the hatch! By this point in the food festival, a kind friend may need to wheelbarrow you back to the Bellamy for comfort food and the hair of the dog, but wheel they must. What is a show without a proper denouement? Sunday, May 14, 1–4 p.m. Tickets: $35 (Adult) $5 (Children). Three-day pass $135. Proceeds benefit First Fruit Ministries. www.wilmingtonwineandfood.com

Splendor in the Grass

If there is such a thing as a golf lottery, Wilmington has won it. Perhaps the largest, certainly the most prestigious tournament in North Carolina is coming to our small piece of paradise. Locals and vacationers know about the luxurious private course at Eagle Point Golf Club and now so will the 20 million people watching the PGA tournament at home. But if you're reading this, chances are you're already in Wilmington and can pony up $30 to watch the Wells Fargo Championship in person, on the grounds. Top professional golfers will compete for the 2017 title. (Read more about Eagle Point and how the tournament chose Wilmington on page 62).

May 1–7, shuttles run 6 a.m.–9 p.m. Admission: $30–165. Eagle Point Golf Club, 8131 Bald Eagle Lane, Wilmington. Info: (800) 945-0777 or Wilmington.wellsfargochampionship.com.

By Any Other Name. . .

The poets are onto something. Is there anything as romantic as a garden rose? Ask any rose gardener and they'll tell you of the labors of love required to coax a rose into its full glory. And what is romance without some sweet-talking? Take your nose on this sweet-smelling tour for the Wilmington Cape Fear Rose Society's 14th Annual Rose Garden Tour. Nine spectacular gardens will be open to the public with owners present to offer wisdom on the fickle mistress, the rose bush. Saturday, May 13, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Free. Tour route: www.wcfrs.blogspot.com

Greased Lightning

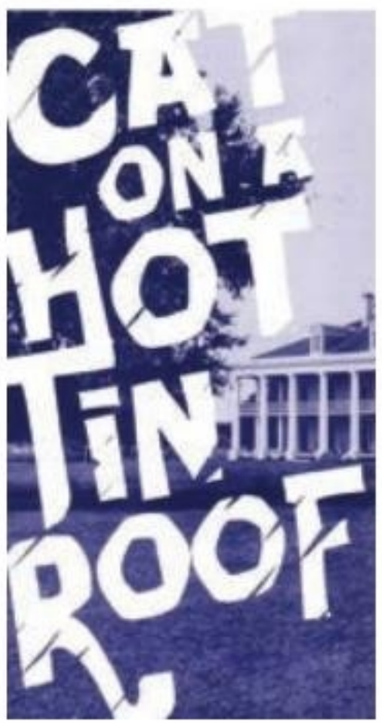
Classic car aficionados abound in the Cape Fear Region, but only once a year do they flood downtown all at once for a droolworthy afternoon of classic rides, hot rods and pinups. The car show on Saturday, May 20, lasts 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. and if you're downtown, you can't miss it. Free. www.rimsontheriver.com

Double Feature

What's better than one Gilbert and Sullivan opera? Two Gilbert & Sullivan operas. Namely, *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *Pirates of Penzance*. In a happy twist of fate, on Saturday the real deal New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players present *H.M.S Pinafore*, the tale of a love triangle where everyone, even dear little Buttercup, finds love. Then on Sunday, the North Carolina Symphony plays the score from *Pirates of Penzance* with UNC School of the Arts actors performing a semi-staged version of the comic tale about the daughter of modern Major-General and the lovable pirates. The shows will be different, of course, and each telling unique: One fully produced show by the quintessential company, NYGASP (in its 43rd year), and the other focused on the music, showcasing the indomitable power of our state's symphony. But what a wonderful experiment to see them back-to-back. Saturday, May 6, 7:30 p.m. New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players present *H.M.S Pinafore*, Tickets: $36–64. Sunday, May 7, 7:30 p.m. North Carolina Symphony presents *Pirates of Penzance*, Tickets: $18–67. CFCC Wilson Center, 703 North Third Street, Wilmington. www.capefearstage.com

Is Your Grass Blue?

Perhaps the frontrunners of the new generation of finger pickin' good bluegrass artists, Greensky Bluegrass is a five-piece band, offering a full sound, ripe with impeccable playing. On the edge of rock, Greensky offers hypnotizing string melodies to satisfy the mountain romantic in all of us. The band is quickly gaining national recognition, but you can hear them in our beautiful swamp forest venue and pack your own picnic. Sunday, May 14, Doors: 4 p.m., Show: 5 p.m. Tickets: $23–28. www.Greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com



Maggie the Cat

Theater buffs need only those three words to leap for tickets. Thalian Association presents Tennessee William's classic Pulitzer-prize winning play *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Southern family drama is his specialty and Maggie the Cat, his fiery muse. Trouble compounds on Maggie, her husband, aging football star Brick and the rest of family when Big Daddy's estate is in question. Deceit always comes to light and when it does, it ain't pretty. May 18-28, Thursday-Saturday 7:30 p.m., Sundays 3:30 p.m.Tickets: $15–30. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

Natural Wonders

It's no wonder the work of artist Janette K. Hopper is owned by the National Parks Service, among private and public museums and collections. Her skilled landscapes celebrate everything that is joyful, reverent, and mysterious about the natural world and our relationship to it. Expect paintings layered with linocut turtles coming into view, masks fashioned with shells, sticks and honeycombs, projections and sound installations to transport a gallery hopper into a heightened state of natural awareness. Show runs May 15–June 23. Opening reception May 26, 6–9 p.m. Free. CFCC Wilma Daniels Gallery, 200 Hanover Street. www.janettekhopper.com.

Jewish Film Festival

More movies, please! Two more weeks of the Wilmington Jewish Film Festival bring us award-winning movies we can't get anywhere else in town, plus catered receptions to follow from A Thyme Savor (Sundays) or desserts and coffee (weeknights) so we can share our insights instead of rushing out to the parking lot. All screenings at Thalian Hall, 300 Chestnut Street. Tickets: $7–17 per show, (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org. More info and trailers online at www.wilmingtonjff.org

Tuesday, May 2, 7 p.m. *Fever At Dawn* (2015). This dramatic Hungarian feature film based on a true story follows a young man, Miklos, in 1945 who is told he has six months to live. He starts writing letters to find a girl to fall in love with when destiny intervenes. English subtitles.

Wednesday, May 3, 7 p.m. *Remember* (2015). This whodunit will get your blood pressure up. Two elderly Holocaust survivors (Christopher Plummer, Martin Landau) meet. One sends the other on a mission to kill the Auschwitz guard who murdered their families and, trekking around the world, finds more than he bargained for.

Thursday, May 4, 7 p.m. *The Women's Balcony* (2016). This Hebrew comedy tells the story of a lively community in Jerusalem divided by an orthodox rabbi wherein the women are called to demonstrate their fortitude. English subtitles.

Sunday, May 7, 3 p.m. *Phoenix* (2014). This German drama follows Nelly's quest for truth when the Holocaust survivor and former cabaret singer returns to Berlin after the war (and facial reconstructive surgery). Now disguised, she misleads her own husband (who doesn't recognize her) to discover if he was the one who betrayed her to the Nazis. English subtitles.

Monday, May 8, 7 p.m. *Fanny's Journey* (2016). This unforgettable French film tells the true story of Fanny and her 10 siblings who, fleeing from the Nazis, are stranded on their own and accomplish the impossible: reaching the Swiss border and their freedom. English subtitles.

Tuesday, May 9, 7 p.m. *Joe's Violin* (2016) and *In Search of Israeli Cuisine* (2016). Enjoy the finale: a double feature with an Academy Award–nominated short about the new life of a Holocaust survivor's violin and a documentary of a Jewish-American chef seeking the essence of Israeli food in this culinary portrait.

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Character Witness

A daddy's girl grows up

By Isabel Zermani

When I was little, I wanted to be just like my Dad. As the younger of my father's two daughters, naturally my sister got first pick — "Mommy's my mommy, Daddy's your mommy," she proclaimed, according to family legend. My mother, the storyteller, says I let go of her hand and toddled over to Dad and have been there ever since.

My dad and I did all the fun stuff: built model airplanes, the model train in the attic and erector sets. We tromped around in the woods we called "Forest Home," where my Dad built his first house after college and before children — in those mysterious years my sister and I are only now old enough to fill in. He also occasionally took me to work with him.

Sometimes we'd go to his law office and I'd stop by the supply closet to stock up on "leaky" pens and legal pads before heading to the courthouse, which fell somewhere between a church and theater in my young mind. A portrait of Thomas Jefferson — who was perhaps more godly than God in my family — still hangs above the judge in the county courtroom of my hometown, Charlottesville, Virginia. On my legal pad, I sketched the judge, the defendant, the lawyers, and the court marshals as reverently and seriously as I could. I'd seen *To Kill A Mockingbird* on television too many times with my mother not to know how to behave for Atticus Finch.

My father never wanted a boy. If you ask my mother, she'll tell you they didn't even have a name picked out for a boy, that she was in labor asking — between quick Lamaze breaths — "What about John? What about George?" and got no answer. When I was born, my Dad simply said, "There's my Isabel." I was determined to prove I was just as good as any boy would've been.

Adolescence divided us. I now suppose that happens to all parents and children, but back then it felt personal The sudden, mounting pressures of being a girl and my changing interests seemed to coincide with a time of extreme career focus (and grumpiness) for my father and, subsequently, heart trouble. He had a heart valve replacement during my senior year in high school and went to trial on a high-profile case only days later with the staples still in his chest. We gave him wide berth.

The genes from my mother: artistic, optimistic, impractical, started to kick in. She wrote a novel titled *The Lady with the Alligator Purse* after the childhood rhyme about a lady with an alligator purse who bests both the doctor and the nurse by curing a child's ailment with ice cream. A tried and true method. A former majorette turned 1970s cub reporter who sang in a piano bar at a time when those were more popular than they are now, my mother was just the type of glamorous figure I, as a teenager, wanted to emulate. Besides, genetics takes its course without permission.

Writ in the DNA of my mother is another childhood literary figure, Amelia Bedelia, the well-meaning housekeeper whose chronic misinterpretations don't necessarily get the job done, but all work out happily in the end, usually due to her great attitude and baked goods. My mother's old car used to break down so frequently when my sister and I were young that we thought Shermie and Dawn were her friends, not the tow-truck company — they turned out to be both, as, also writ in her DNA is the inability to go someplace without making a friend.

Though my father and I look alike, both graced with translucent German skin — the burn layer — our paths deviated. I did not become a lawyer. I do not do my own taxes. Perhaps John or George would've been a Jefferson scholar, passed the bar, and never fiddled with the thermostat. Two years ago, on a whim, I tried my hand at courtroom sketch art in earnest. I knew my father had a federal trial, a RICO case, coming up, big enough to warrant a sketch artist, but likely not big enough to draw the big names.

I studied up on the discipline. You want to be accurate and clear. Invent nothing, deny nothing. It's important not to suggest too much emotion. My father arranged for me to practice in the lower courts, drawing DUIs and drug arrests, in preparation.

The big case came in May and for the first time my Dad and I were up at the same time, in our suits, walking to court and spending every day together. I drew the judges, the defendants, the lawyers and the court marshals. I drew the jury selection during voir dire using ghostly shapes, emphasizing one element — glasses, a button-down, curly hair — to preserve the jurors' anonymity. I drew my father's opening statement, the same way I remember drawing him on my legal pad when my feet couldn't touch the ground.

It was rewarding to publish my drawings, more so to play a role in the theater of my father, but, most of all, to hear from his friends and colleagues who spent those days with us: "You two are exactly alike." His secretary even took to calling me "mini-Fred."

The orbit has come around and my father has rediscovered some passions we share. He's restored my childhood dollhouse, meticulously building the furniture. (I'm assembling the Chippendale secretary.) He museum-hops and studies Impressionist painters, a focus of my art history degree. He recently sent me a folder of his cartoons as the editor of University of Virginia's *Cavalier Daily*. I still want to be like my dad, but now I know I don't have to try.

Isabel Zermani, our senior editor, prefers the storied life.

ILLUSTRATION BY ISABEL ZERMANI

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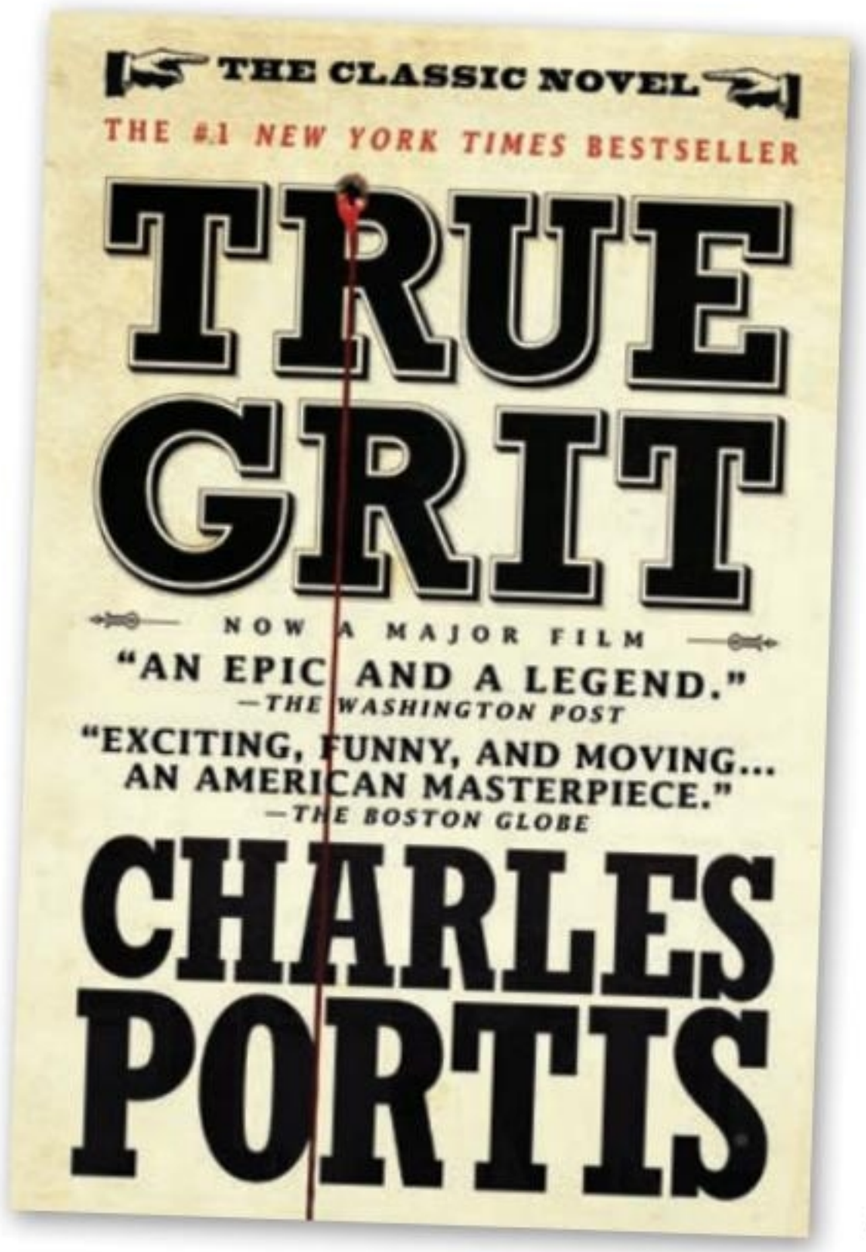


By Stephen E. Smith

In the late 1960s, a friend who's an avid reader of popular fiction plowed through the novel *True Grit* and saw the John Wayne/Kim Darby movie on the same day, immersing himself in Charles Portis' yarn set in Indian Territory in the late 1800s and acquiring what must have been a disconcerting insight into Hollywood's inherent ability to mangle art (at the very least, the movie moguls could have spared us the sorry acting of Glen Campbell). About the same time, I read *True Grit* and concluded that the novel was chockfull of memorable characters and the quirkiest dialogue ever uttered by fictional beings who aren't working overtime at being funny.

My friend and I have been quoting lines from the novel for almost 50 years — not constantly, of course, but when our conversation happens onto a subject that might be illuminated or made humorous by a sentence or two attributable to Rooster Cogburn or Mattie Ross, we've never hesitated to employ Portis' superbly crafted dialogue. I'm particularly fond of quoting from the exchange between the horse trader Stonehill (played in the original film by the inimitable Strother Martin) and Mattie as she attempts to wrangle a refund for the ponies her late father had purchased. Stonehill threatens to go to a lawyer and Mattie responds, "And I will take it up with mine . . . He will make money and I will make money and your lawyer will make money and you, Mr. Licensed Auctioneer, will foot the bill." Who hasn't wanted to utter that sentence when dealing with a litigious tormentor?

My friend is fond of quoting passages from Rooster's hilarious, self-serving explication of his checkered past, as when he alludes to the wife and the son he abandoned: "She said, 'Goodbye, Reuben, a love of decency does not abide in you.' There is your divorced woman talking about decency . . . She took my boy with her too . . . You would not want to see a clumsier child than Horace. I bet he broke forty cups."

But enough. You can quote almost any passage from the novel, including sections of Mattie's deadpan first-person narration, and you'll likely set the table on a roar.

I'm not in the habit of rereading novels, but that's exactly what I did after seeing the Coen brothers' adaptation of *True Grit*. I decided to give Portis' novel a thorough reassessment almost a half century after my first encounter with Mattie Ross. After all, America was a very different place in 1968: the women's movement, the war in Vietnam, the counterculture. Would the novel hold up to changes in mores and tastes? Is it as well-written as I remembered?

I completed the reread, taking my time and occasionally re-evaluating scenes I judged particularly memorable, and here's what I concluded: *True Grit* is great American fiction — not a great American Western — but great American fiction period, worthy of study as a literary masterwork and occupying a station commensurate with *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Unfortunately, *True Grit* has never attracted the academic attention that Twain's masterpiece and Harper Lee's sentimental story of the South have garnered. It is a genre Western, and what self-respecting academic would publish a monograph titled "Repression, Revision, and Psychoanalysis in the Soliloquies of Rooster Cogburn"? But from the novel's opening sentence — "People do not give it credence that a fourteen-year-old girl could leave home and go off in the wintertime to avenge her father's blood but

it did not seem so strange then, although I will say it did not happen every day" — Mattie Ross establishes herself as the archetypal American hero, an individual so self-possessed that she's capable of rejecting collective wisdom. In that one sentence, Portis establishes a form and voice that embodies an entire sensibility, a collection of manners, mores, thoughts and feelings, faithful to the spectrum of American experience and emblematic of a rich inner and outer life. As Clarence Darrow wrote: ". . . he (an American) is never sure that he is right unless the great majority is against him." That's Mattie Ross, and the reader is instantly smitten.

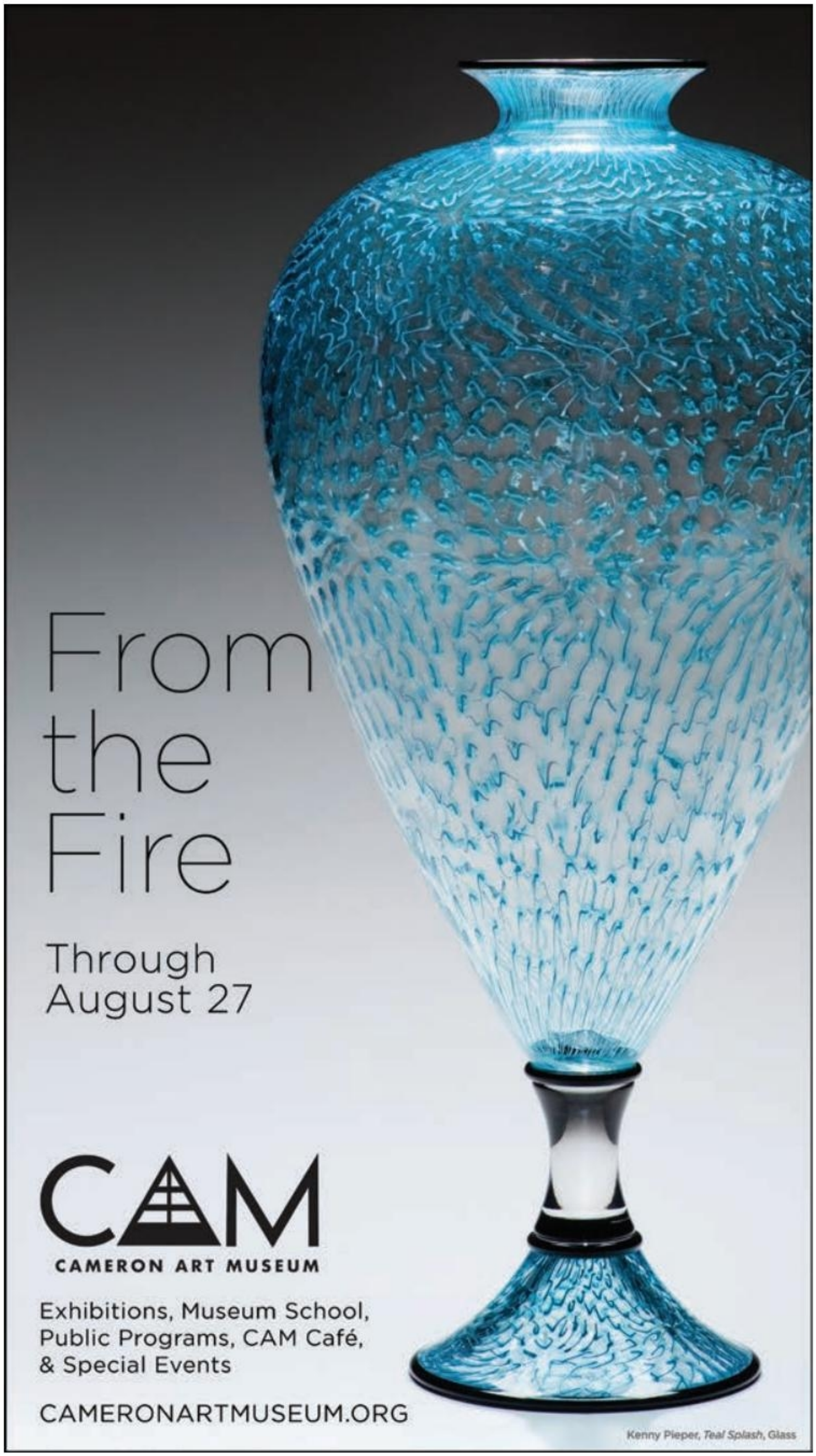
And it's Mattie's steady voice and an unwavering determination — as profoundly established as that of Scout Finch and Huck Finn — that propel the reader through the multiplicity of experience that confronts her. Rooster Cogburn is Mattie's antithesis — alcoholic, vulgar, pragmatic, possessed of almost every human weakness but redeemed by fortitude and a strained, awkward sense of loyalty and a disarming honesty. "I found myself one pretty spring day in Las Vegas, New Mexico, in need of a road stake and I robbed one of them little high-interest banks there. Thought I was doing a good service. You can't rob a thief, can you? I never robbed no citizens. I never taken a man's watch."

When it comes to the major themes around which literature teachers construct their lessons, *True Grit* touches subtlety on each and every one — the frontier, the American dream, East vs. West/North vs. South, the journey from innocence into knowledge, sense of community, sophistication vs. a lack thereof, etc. — and it does so without a trace of burdensome preachiness. But mostly, the novel is a story that suspends time, freezes the reader in a moment in our history that evolves finally into the present, giving us a sure knowledge of who we are and how we came to be here. What more can we ask of an American novel?

The John Wayne and Coen brothers' cinematic interpretations of *True Grit* are entertaining and reasonably faithful to the original work, but it's Portis' novel that's the real deal, a solid piece of Americana that deserves to be read and studied for generations.

It occurs to me, finally, that I should have said all of this 50 years ago — *True Grit* was as deserving of praise then as now — but as Mattie Ross articulates succinctly in the novel's conclusion: "Time just gets away from us."

Stephen E. Smith is a retired professor and the author of seven books of poetry and prose. He's the recipient of the Poetry Northwest Young Poet's Prize, the Zoe Kincaid Brockman Prize for poetry and four North Carolina Press awards.



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When Words Fall Away

In time, the language we learn is also the one we lose

By Wiley Cash

My dad and I are pacing up and down the road in front of my parents' house in Oak Island, North Carolina. I have my arm around his waist and a hand beneath his elbow as if I'm escorting him. We're only moving as fast as his shuffling feet will allow, but I'm scared to let him go. I'm afraid that he might fall.

It's Monday, May 23rd of last year. The late morning is warm and bright, but not yet hot or humid the way it will be hot and humid in a week or two. A motorboat courses along the waterway across the street. A blue heron flushes at the sound, spreads its wings, and rises from the bank. Its shadow passes on the road at our feet. My dad's eyes are downturned, and I know he did not see the heron take flight, but I wonder if he saw its shadow when it drifted before us. I look over at him; his eyes are closed, his mouth moving silently as if he's speaking to himself or to someone who's not there.

"What are you saying, Dad?"

He raises his head a little. His eyes are still closed. "Maw and Paw," he says.

"Maw and Paw? Your grandparents?"

He blinks his eyes until he can open them all the way. He looks at me for a moment. "Maw and Paw," he says again. "We going to see them?"

"I don't know," I say. "We might." Maw and Paw were my dad's maternal grandparents, tenant farmers from Cleveland County, North Carolina, where my dad was born and raised. His grandfather passed away in 1955; his grandmother in 1973, four years before I was born. My dad will pass away on Friday evening, only five days from now, but of course, I don't know this yet. Two weeks ago he was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor—the melanoma he had six years ago has returned—and the oncologist has told us that my dad has no good options aside from being kept as comfortable as possible.

The tumor is roughly the size of a walnut. It was discovered following two separate seizures, the first in late March, the second in early May, that both resulted in weeklong hospital stays. My dad's short-term memory and motor function were the first things to be affected, and then he began struggling with language: He couldn't find the right words. He referred to the hospital in Myrtle Beach, where he was flown by emergency helicopter, as an airport. A few weeks ago, during a restless stay at the hospital in Wilmington, he and I were taking slow laps around the floor when he stopped at a window and looked out on the rainy afternoon. He sighed. "It's pretty snickers out there today, isn't it?"

"It is," I said. "It's pretty snickers."

My sister is a hospice nurse, and she has explained to our family that as the dying reach the end of their lives they begin to talk about people who have gone before them. Perhaps that's why my dad is asking about his grandparents now. But perhaps it's something else. Perhaps he's substituting the words Maw and Paw for death or unknown or uncertainty. I look over at him. His eyes are closed again, his mouth moving in silent speech. I picture words bouncing around the inside of my dad's brain as he tries to speak them. He attempts to focus on each word as it passes before his mind's eye: hospital blurs into airport; rainy or cloudy or dreary morphs into snickers. Tonight he will stir in the hospital bed set up in my parents' bedroom. He will open his eyes, find me sitting beside him. He will say, "There's a snake outside in the grass." Will this mean he's afraid?

Earlier in the spring, my wife and I stood in our kitchen and watched a dove flutter against the screens of our enclosed porch. We'd left the door open during the night, and the bird had found its way inside. My wife wanted to go out with a broom and guide the dove toward the open door, and I imagine myself trying to do this with my dad, with the word he needs ping-ponging inside his head, looking for a way to escape. But instead of using a broom, I will ask him, "What do you mean, Dad? What are you trying to say?"

I convinced my wife to stay inside, convinced her that the dove would find its way out on its own. Seconds later, something sliced through my line of vision and exploded inside the porch like a hand grenade. When the feathers settled, a Cooper's hawk stood in the middle of the porch, the dove clutched in its talons. The hawk lifted into the air and flew through the open door. I took the broom out to the porch and swept up the feathers and left for work.

My wife called me at my office a few hours later. She and our two girls had gone outside and discovered that the trees in the backyard were full of what seemed to be hundreds of birds all sitting in total silence. She said she stared up at them, shocked by what she was seeing. And then, all at once, the birds lifted from

ILLUSTRATION BY ROMEY PETITE

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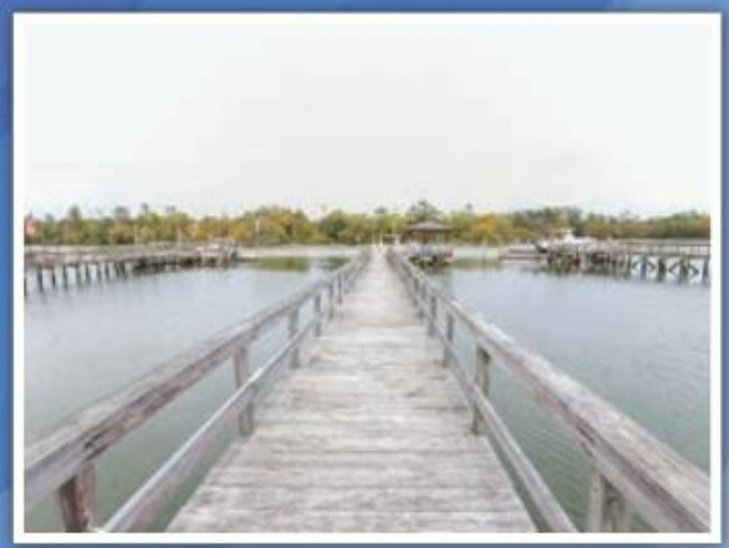

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the trees in a storm of wings and took to the sky.

"I can't do it justice," she said. "I can't tell you how incredible it was. It felt like they were all gathered there in mourning."

I remember standing at the office window and staring out at a half-empty parking lot where the midday sun slanted off the roofs and windshields of parked cars. I listened to my wife struggle to find the words to explain what she'd just seen, how it had felt to see it, what it had meant to her.

"I'm trying to describe it," she said. "But I can't."

I understood. I spend an incredible amount of time thinking of ways to attach language to abstraction, the root of all feeling, whether those feelings are fear, uncertainty, wonder, or grief. Language is a concrete thing humans created eons ago to say the unsayable, and we've been trying to say it ever since.

Our oldest daughter is 2, and every day we watch her grapple with language. A phrase she's probably heard more than any other is "I love you." Perhaps this explains why she refers to herself in the second person. You can ask, "Who wants to play?" and she'll say, "You," meaning herself. "Does anyone want to read a book?" You. "Raise your hand if you want to go to the library." You! You!

Eventually, she will understand the rules of our language, and she will begin to supplant the second person you with the first person I, but that does not mean she will have a different sense of herself. Her you has always meant me, and we've always understood because we've watched her use of language evolve.

Now, I'm watching my dad's use of language devolve. I have no doubt that he understood what he meant when he looked out the window and described the scene as "pretty snickers," and I have no doubt that if I had more time with him that I could slowly begin to understand and speak his language. After all, I understand how he feels, I just need more time to put a word to it.

But by Wednesday afternoon he will be too weak to speak, and he will be relegated to a hospital bed set up by a picture window in my parents' bedroom. At least one member of our family will be at his bedside day and night, sometimes talking or praying, sometimes sitting in silence. I won't remember the last words I say to him, nor will I remember the last words he said to me. But I will remember how it felt when he passed: the dark, quiet bedroom; the feel of my family pressed in tight around his bed; the awareness of a subtle stirring, of something lifting away; the certainty that I'll never be able to find the words to explain it.

Wiley Cash is the New York Times *best-selling author of* A Land More Kind than Home *and* This Dark Road to Mercy. *His forthcoming novel,* The Last Ballad, *will be released in October.*

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Magic in the Cube

How concept-driven set designer Gary Ralph Smith elevates local productions

By Nicholas Gray

"Let me just putter around for a bit," Gary Ralph Smith says as I enter his workshop space. A slim, blue-eyed, paint-speckled man, Smith is a set designer from Raleigh whose high demand keeps him more often in Wilmington. Though Smith has artfully created some of our community's most thoughtful, aesthetically charged and intoxicating sets in decades — *On Golden Pond, The Fantasticks, It's Only A Play* — he is not the braggadocious artist that many gifted aesthetes can be. Rather, he is humble and modest, seemingly without knowledge of the scope of his skill. So putter he does, seeking out flaws to fix while I press him for insight into his craft.

Smith, a UNC School of the Arts grad, worked for years in the New York theater scene doing sets, costumes, props — "You take what you can get as far as work goes" says Smith.

Smith comes to Wilmington under the widespread wing of theater-patriot-at-large Tony Rivenbark – executive director of Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts and artistic director of The Cube Theatre. Upon the completion of Thalian Hall's massive renovations in 2010, Rivenbark sought an avenue to reintroduce our trepidatious local theater companies to the rental advantages of the Ruth and Bucky Stein Studio. Though the lighting is top-notch and the audience seating is careful in its comfort and visibility, the stage itself is quite shallow — requiring great imagination — and not necessarily one's first choice.

Thus, The Cube Theatre company was born. Rivenbark initially proposed a challenge for the company, "with every show (we produce) in the Studio, there should be a problem to it, with regard to the technical parameters," that they overcome. Enter Gary Ralph Smith, with the solution to the endeavor at hand.

Smith solved the problem of suggestive realism, with the well-known and often set outdoors play *On Golden Pond*, by Ernest Thompson. Smith created the feel of a sweeping landscape in a contained space. And then, he tackled the problem of shrinking the Rob Zapple Thalian Hall annual Mainstage favorite *A Christmas Carol* — Dickens set in the dustbowl era — into the Studio, which he did with the wonders of cardboard. The humble shack with tin roof was crafted, imperceptibly, out of quick-to-move cardboard.

"How do we produce a musical in this space?" Smith stepped in for *The Fantasticks*, by literally pulling an entire show out of a box. At the top of the show, the characters, their props and set pieces emerged from a treasure chest on stage.

The self-referential comedy *It's Only a Play* brought the steep challenge of creating a gorgeous 1980s New York City penthouse with many technical tricks — an offstage dog in the bathroom, a raucous party just downstairs — to be played, aside from creating opulent decadence on a black box budget.

"He has a real concept, a light touch, but incredibly immersive," says Rivenbark. "He cares extensively about each aspect of the show and how it caters to his design or how he might cater to those — actors, costuming, the props, all of it." Simply put, "He is not the 'I'm gonna build my set and go' guy."

The Fantasticks director Shane Fernando affirms Smith's assets. "He might fight like hell for his point of view, but he also understands the need to make the performers' and other creatives' jobs easier. And that is very rare."

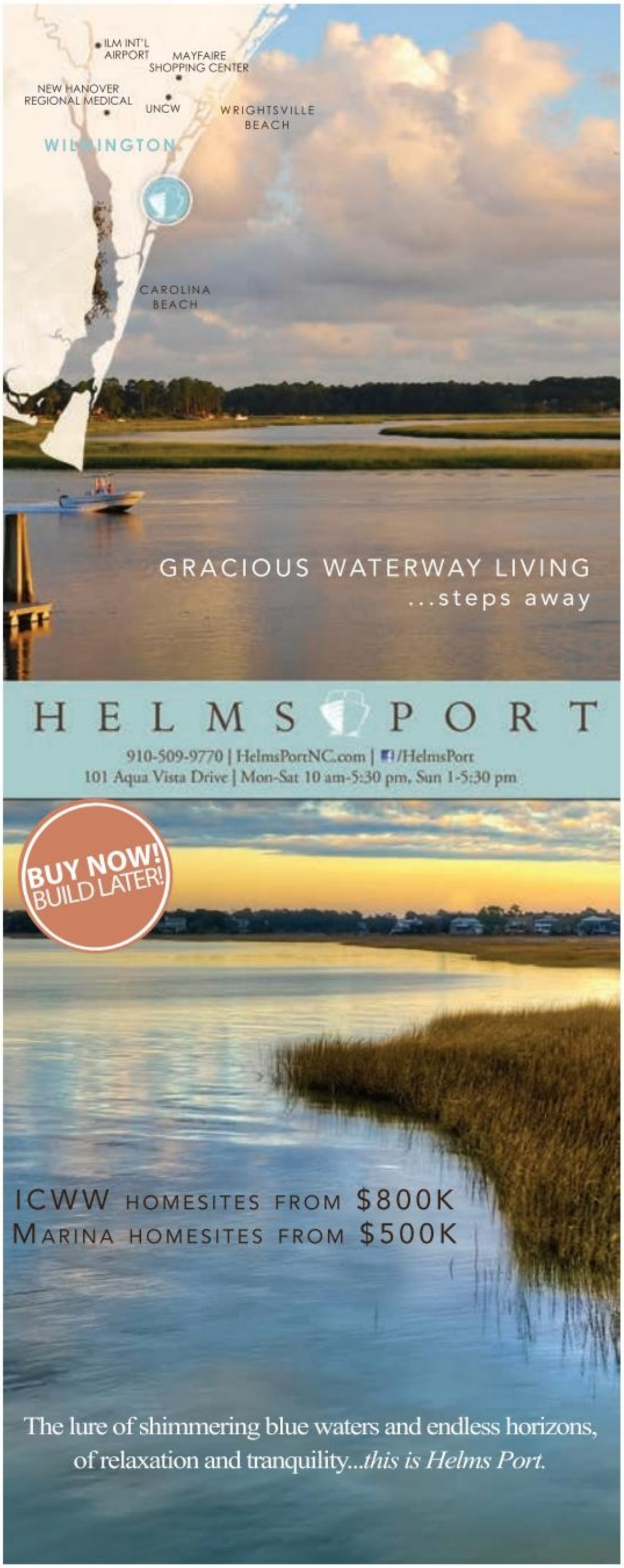
In the workshop, Smith continues to putter about as I wander uninvited into the Dreams' Garage theater space to behold another set of Smith's. Immediately, I'm blitzed. I glamoured by the sheer work laid out well in-advance of this show's opening night. I'm also privy to the quaintest of intricate cardboard models created by Smith, so that — even before this early date — each and every collaborator can picture exactly what they are walking into.

"Unfortunately, too often, our actors and crew have no idea what they're going to be dealing with, but Gary Ralph provides something different, (where ultimately audiences) can see a whole, consistent piece of theater," says Rivenbark, who is quick to credit Smith for the success of The Cube's productions.

Lastly, I ask Smith about his dream project, and he answers without pause, Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*. Any takers? It's for certain we'd be stunned.

Up next for Gary Ralph Smith: Ira Lavin's murder mystery *Deathtrap*, directed by Shane Fernando, May 18–29, Ruth & Bucky Stein Theatre at Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Thursdays-Saturdays, 7:30 p.m., Sundays 3:00 p.m. Tickets: www.thalianhall.org

Nicholas Gray is the former artistic director of City Stage Co.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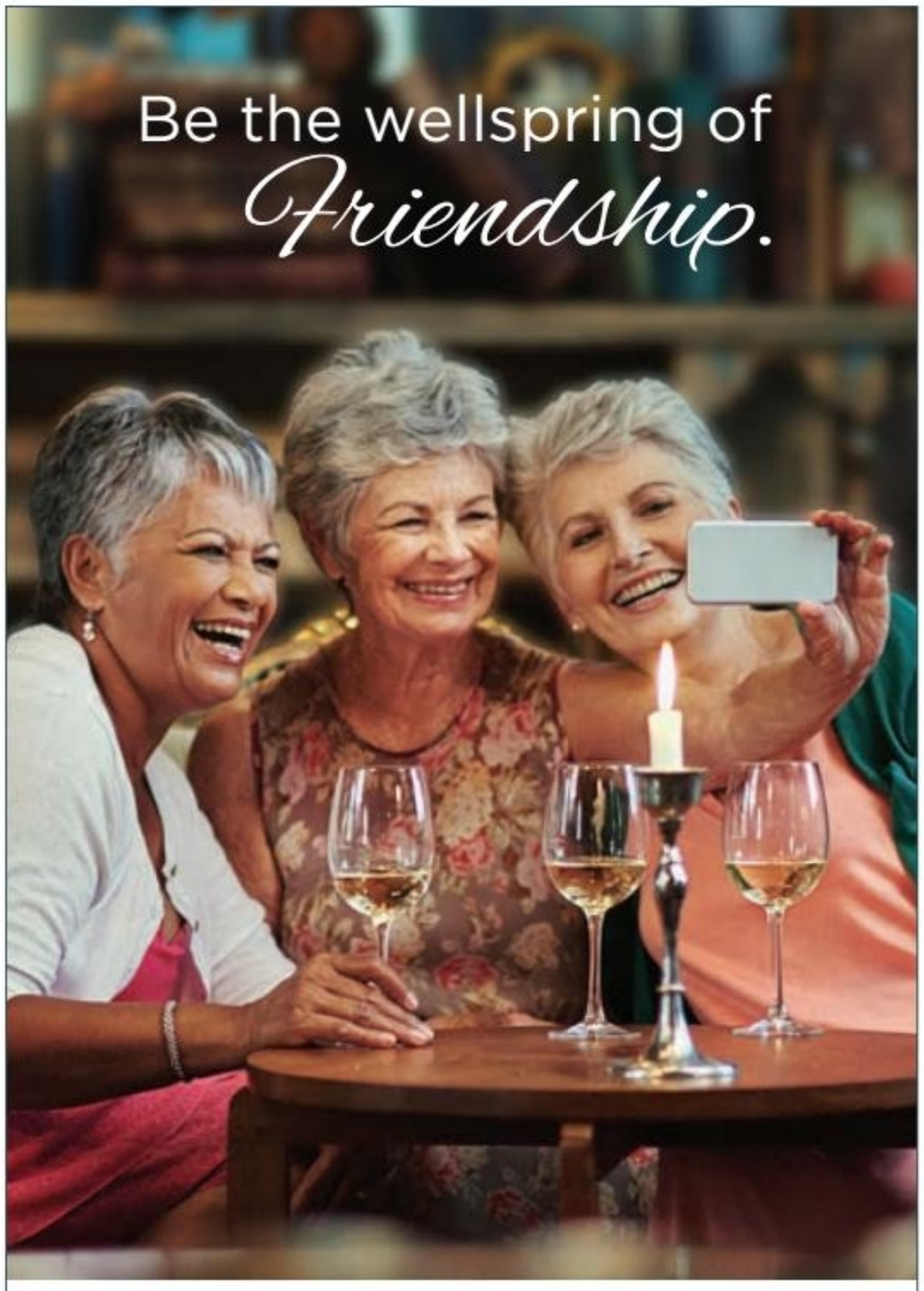

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Well-Anchored

Over Cobb salad and virgin margarita, a free-ranging conversation with Wilmington's home-grown news anchor

By Dana Sachs

People in

Wilmington may not be surprised to learn that, as a child, longtime WECT anchor Frances Weller read the news aloud to her family. "I was born to report," she says, describing her ritual of orating the day's events at the dinner table. "I felt it was my duty to inform them."

Frances actually grew up here in Wilmington, and her love of the news came from a curiosity about, well, everything. When she and I meet for lunch one day at Tower Seven Baja Mexican Grill, she tells me that her twin sister, Margaret, used to call her "the nosiest person I know." Frances tends to agree. It seemed natural, then, that she would go into journalism after she graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill. Less natural was the fact that she found a job in Wilmington, her hometown, and that she's stayed for 34 years (and counting). According to Frances, television journalists transfer frequently, moving to increasingly bigger media markets. In contrast, Frances has thrived by staying in Wilmington as it's grown. "I didn't have to move to a bigger market," she says. "The bigger market moved to me."

Not that everything came easily. During Frances' senior year in college, she applied for an internship at WRAL in Raleigh. In the interview, a station executive focused on technical questions, like, "What is a chyron?" Frances couldn't answer (it's the text running at the bottom of the screen, in case you're wondering). The interviewer seemed to believe that Frances didn't care about journalism but rather only wanted to appear on TV. "They basically said, 'Don't call us, we'll call you,'" she tells me.

Even some family members doubted her choice. A cousin who worked as a journalist in Cairo, Egypt, told her, "You're not callous enough for this profession."

Frances persisted.

Then, one morning after graduation, WECT called, inviting her for an interview at three o'clock that afternoon. She was still living in the Triangle at the time, so she phoned a friend in Wilmington and said, "Have your best suit ready. Have the lady across the street be ready to do my hair." She drove down to Wilmington, put on the suit, got her hair done, and walked into the station right on time. She's been there ever since, and her broadcast style — warm, wry, and very steady — has become almost a personal trademark.

In her early years, though, Frances worried that her cousin was right, that she was too soft for the news business. In 1986, four years into her job, for example, the space shuttle Challenger exploded, killing all seven people on board. "I remember looking at that video and wanting to burst into tears," she says.

I wonder how she may have changed. "Do news stories these days ever affect you like they did back then?"

Our server has placed a virgin margarita in front of Frances and she sips it, thinking. "Remember that little boy killed in a car accident on Oleander recently?"

I nod. A pickup truck rear-ended a car.

Across the table, Frances' eyes have filled with tears. "Those stories are so sad."

"So, is it challenging? Reporting a story like that on the air?"

She shakes her head emphatically. "Not at all." As quickly as the emotion appeared on her face, it disappears, replaced by the cool neutrality of a news anchor. "I learned to turn Frances the person off and turn Frances the journalist on."

If Frances always maintains that professionalism on air, in person she's relaxed and chatty. Her work day doesn't begin until 3 p.m, which means that lunch can be a laid-back affair. If you envy her routine, though, remember this: While you're sipping your cocktail after work, Frances is sitting at her desk in the WECT newsroom, writing teasers and stories for News at 11.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW SHERMAN

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Though Tower Seven specializes in Mexican food, the menu has a much broader range than tacos, burritos and enchiladas. On the Baja Chicken Wrap, a zesty green chile ranch dressing pulls together the tastes of grilled chicken, bacon and avocado. "Sometimes grilled chicken is tough to chew," Frances remarks, "but this is very tender." Because she's not a fan of very spicy food, the batter-fried Angry Shrimp presents a bit of a challenge. The restaurant offers two options for the dish, "Heck Sauce" and "Hell Sauce." It turns out that even "Heck" is slightly devilish. Frances says, "I would definitely stay away from 'Hell,'" and invents a third option for eating the shrimp, which is to devour it without any sauce. On our classic Cobb salad, she loves the mix of crunchy vegetables, crispy bacon, blue cheese, grilled chicken and hard-cooked eggs. "I'm definitely coming back," she tells me. Here's a little secret about Frances Weller: She stashes a bottle of her favorite Sweet Honey Catalina salad dressing in her pocketbook, just in case.

And here's another secret: She's no political junkie. "It's so nasty," she tells me. Rather than politics, she prefers subjects that "make a difference in people's lives." As a local personality, she promotes area charities as well as her own social service projects. Weller's Wheels, for example, provides bicycles for poor children. Fran's Fans distributes paper fans to the elderly in the summer. And Plaid Pack educates the public about cancer.

Eventually, I do bring up a controversial subject. "What do you think of the debate over fake news?" I ask. For a moment, Frances winces, holds up her virgin margarita, and makes as if to call our server. "I'm going to need alcohol for this one."

Joking aside, she answers firmly. "People want to blame somebody for what's

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going on with the world and the media is an easy target. Is there fake news out there? Absolutely. But it is a farce to say that journalists are all about fake news."

This month, when the weeklong Wells Fargo Championship opens at Eagle Point Golf Club, 30 members of WECT's staff will cover it. The team will include digital experts, technicians flying drones over the course, and golf commentators discussing every hole. Each day during competition, Frances and her co-anchor, Jon Evans, will broadcast the evening news directly from the press tent. "As a news event, it's the biggest of my lifetime," Frances tells me. "We've had presidents of the United States here, but as far as a week long event, this is it."

Frances is a journalist, of course, but her excitement reminds me that she's speaking as a Wilmington native, too. This reporter has covered her hometown for three decades. Now the world is turning its attention toward her beloved city.

Tower Seven is located at 4 North Lumina Ave. in Wrightsville Beach. For more information, call (910) 256-8585. Frances Weller appears on WECT weeknights at 5, 6 and 11, except for the late broadcast on Friday nights, which she now takes off.

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores, online and throughout Wilmington.*

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The Great Ice Cream Debate

Pick your berry – and come out licking

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

By Jason Frye

Take it from my wife, Lauren, food writers are the worst to eat with.

Which brings me to ice cream and Lewis Farms.

Last year I planned my work travels poorly and was out of town for strawberry season, and blueberry season, and blackberry season, but I was lucky enough to get there for ice cream season, which really runs the whole time they're open, through spring and summer.

This year I've already traveled out of the country, across the state, had beer tastings and wine dinners and desserts galore, but every weekend I've been home, I've watched for Lewis Farms to open so I can finally have some great ice cream.

But not just any ice cream: Jackson Dairy Farm Ice Cream, which Lewis Farms packs with all the things I didn't get to pick last year and probably won't get to pick this year.

As summer nears, the days get perfect for stopping by Lewis Farms for herbs and flowers for our gardens; and for ice cream. Yeah, ice cream is best when summer's can't-touch-the-steering-wheel-hot, but a warm spring day with bright sunny skies does the trick too, so Lauren and I stopped in at Lewis Farms for ice cream cones. We'd been debating the merits of strawberry versus blueberry ice cream and had reached an impasse. I was right, she was right, no one was backing down.

When we make it to Lewis Farms for U-Pick, Lauren loves the strawberries. I'll admit, there's something intoxicating about a strawberry picked fresh and still holding the heat of the sun as you eat everything but the little toupee of leaves, but I don't like picking them, too much bending over. I'm a blueberry man, and I will admit with only a tiny bit of shame that I will eat approximately one bucket of blueberries in the field as I'm trying to fill a bucket to take home. I have left Lewis Farms with a blueberry stomachache more than once.

We do the only thing that makes sense: She gets strawberry, I get blueberry. One cone and one giant scoop each.

We retreat to the shade beneath the giant umbrella on the patio. Even in the relative cool here, our ice cream melts with surprising rapidity. I guess when it's been springtime weather since February, this is how it goes.

We bite and lick and slurp our cones. We swap halfway through and sample each other's cone before switching back.

The color on the strawberry is much better than the blueberry. Somehow that scoop of ice cream embodies its fruit far better than mine does. And it melts slower. Or I eat slower. Either way, I've got blueberry down to my elbow and she's neat as a pin.

"I can't believe we didn't get to do this last year," she says. She works in travel too and ate more strawberries abroad than here at home last year.

I can't talk; I took a big bite and am suffering from brain freeze. "Muhh hunh" is the best I can do.

"Best. Cone. Ever." she says.

Then my brain unfreezes and the food writer thing kicks in.

"You think so?" I say.

She holds her cone at arm's length, eyes it. "Yeah, I do. It's so strawberry-y."

"I'd say it's too strawberry-y. I think the blueberry is where it's at. Enough of the blueberry to taste the blueberry, but not too much." What am I doing? It's ice cream.

"But I want to taste the berry."

"So do I," I say, "but not just the berry. That's all I taste in mine, I get the ice cream. The vanilla. The fatty, creamy ice cream creaminess of it. Then the blueberry."

We swap again, tasting, thinking, tasting again. And we swap back.

"I changed my mind," I say. "I think yours is better."

"That's what I was going to say," Lauren says, taking her final cone-free bite. "But then I taste mine again and I stand by the strawberry."

I do the same, taste, take a little nibble of cone, taste again. "Agreed, my blueberry is better."

We nibble our cones down to nubs and eat those too. It's not politics, there are no two sides of the ice cream aisle to be on, it's ice cream, and it's delicious. But it does prove one point: Food writers, we're the worst.

Info: Lewis Farms, 6517 Gordon Road, Wilmington. U-Pick local strawberries, blueberries, blackberries and delicious homemade ice cream. 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. Monday – Saturday and 1 p.m. – 6 p.m. on Sunday.

Jason Frye is a regular Salt *contributor and you can keep track of what and where he eats by following him on Instagram: @beardedwriter.*

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Keeping Faith

How a true daughter of the South found her place beneath a rose-colored sky

By Caroline Hamilton Langerman

It wasn't easy being the daughter of a Southern WASP in Boston. As a kid, I fumbled to find the right words when my Catholic, Jewish and agnostic friends asked "what I was."

"I'm a Piscopal," I announced uneasily. This seemed to get me off the hook when my best friend's dad invited me to say the rosary.

My mother, a Colonial Dame, explained that Protestants had broken away from the Catholics for more freedom. But when I saw what fun the Catholics were having at church every Wednesday evening, the frilly white dresses they wore to their First Communions and the romantic names of saints they adopted at their confirmations, I resented that I had been freed against my will. Being a Piscopal offered no perks.

My Jewish friends got bar and bat mitzvahs. Every weekend during seventh grade, I listened to them recite passages from the Torah and slow-danced with their handsome cousins from New York under the shimmering light of a disco ball. Once, I watched with fascination as the parents of my newly initiated-friend kissed with their tongues. I was sure French-kissing was one of the 95 indulgences Martin Luther had pinned to the church wall. Could I protest my Protestantism?

On Sundays, I wriggled into itchy white tights and sat on the velvet pews of our church. The only brightness in the stained glass sanctuary was my brother lip-synching the minister's words.

"Do this for the remembrance of me," he mouthed with his eyes crossed.

In high school, I fell for a Catholic boy like a wrecking ball against brick. There were fire-hot days spent with his 11 siblings on an estate in Woods Hole, and snowy Christmas Eves spent waiting up for his phone call after Midnight Mass. From my early-19th-century twin bed (if Protestants didn't keep idols, why did Mom worship antiques?), I watched the snow fall on our pilgrim roof. Oh, how I would have loved to light candles with JFK as the clock struck 12!

Sitting on the bleachers of Harvard's hockey stadium, I regarded my boyfriend's mother, a former WASP who had converted to Catholicism, with sideways longing. She was tall, brunette, and kept an angelic distance from her offspring, smiling gently when they scraped their knees, frowning slightly when they broke the rules, and whispering amusedly, "Excuse me," when she caught us kissing in the living room. Even as our love was dying in the early days of college, my boyfriend's religion lingered on me like my freckles from our Cape Cod weekends. On a required freshman demographic survey, I checked the box "I believe in the sanctity of human life," feeling the tiniest thrill of rebellion towards my parents, who had on many occasions trapped me in our station wagon to explain the benevolence of Planned Parenthood.

My Southern university did contain Protestants, but they seemed to be speaking a different language from the one I had learned. They mentioned Jesus so often that I started to think I might bump into him at the next fraternity party. They highlighted the Bible with yellow markers and sang praises with a rock band. On Friday nights, they hopped into SUVs with clean-cut boys who were genuinely happy to just hold hands. I was so envious of their clarity. I kept clicking "refresh" in my soul, hoping there might be a Paperless Post from God.

Meanwhile, back in Boston, my brother toyed with agnosticism. His deepest faith was in Tom Brady; his chapel was Fenway Park; his prayer of Thanksgiving was when the golf ball sank — by grace alone — into the 18th hole. "This one's worth watching," he wrote, emailing me links to TED Talks in which geniuses argued for community without communion. During a 10-year stint when I lived in New York City, this philosophy was more compelling than ever.

But I sensed there was magic in this world, and didn't that necessitate magic outside of this world? It was in the never-ending silence after my son was lifted from me and I waited for him to cry. It was in innocence. In my body's gut-wrenching reaction to violence. When I moved to my mother's home state of North Carolina with my husband, it was in the rose-colored sky at 8 o'clock on summer evenings and its reflection on the house next door. "The bricks are glowing again," I said, and some tiny creature inside me felt awed. I was aware of a quiet, lower case rapture.

If Boston had been the muddy water in which I was ineligible for Holy Communion and matzoh ball soup, Charlotte was like the Baskin Robbins of Protestantism. I now qualified for countless parishes and all of their perks.

Like the Bachelorette dizzied by an "amazing group of contestants," I began seeing all of them. I dressed up to meet the handsome Episcopal Church and recite poetry from his eloquent Book of Common Prayer. Just around the corner, the Methodists had an infamous Kids Carnival and a charming minister who, it was exclaimed by beautiful women at cocktail parties, had been nominated for bishop! I joined the gym at the Presbyterian Church and enrolled my son in its Kindermusik classes. On Tuesday mornings, we sang "Jesus Loves Me," and played with a marvelous selection of silk peekaboo scarves. From our backyard, morning and evening, we heard the enchanting bells of the Baptists.

Suddenly, like a herd of elephants who've caught wind of an oasis, my family and friends submitted their opinions on which church I should join. Methodism was too new; never mind that Catholicism was too old. Episcopalians were too superior, never mind that Baptists were too humble.

My mother seemed keenest on the Presbyterian Church, with its Scottish roots.

"But I'm Episcopal. We went there every week. I was confirmed."

She laughed. "Oh, the Episcopal Church was more convenient. Our friends went there."

I hung up the phone and laughed, thinking how arbitrary the aspects of our identity can turn out to be. I looked out the window of my new house. Here was my new street. In my new city. I put a hand on my belly, where there was another new life. After 32 years, I would have to make my own choice about a church for my family.

"Where would you like to go to church?" I asked my toddling son, and he looked at me, trying so hard to understand the question. I picked him up and held him tight, realizing that whatever SWASP's nest I began weaving for him now, he would spend the rest of his life unraveling.

Caroline Hamilton Langerman has published in The New York Times, Elle, Town & Country, Southern Living *and more. She hails from an old Concord family.*

Boxin' Lady

The joy of throwing a good right jab

By Jamie Lynn Miller

Coach won't let me write it down because "your body's got to remember. If you write it down, you think about it. If you think about it, you get hit."

For a writer, though, that's a tall order. I'm used to scribbling down the good stuff and some great stuff happens around the ring. But I try to learn things Coach's way.

***

"Hey Jamie, how's it goin'?" says Leon, a 15-year-old competition track boxer. He steps onto the scale, then strips down to his Hanes skivvies, oblivious to everything but the screen between his feet.

Happy with the number he sees — the same as mine, I discover — Leon hops off the scale and walks across the gym, pants still around his ankles. "Hey, Ma! You ready?"

Just a regular day at Port City Boxing and Fitness, on 13th and Castle, in the old Steven's Hardware building, where Leon's Ma is chatting with Coach Andre Thompson.

Winning his first Golden Gloves at age 16 and continuing on to the Olympic trials, Coach Andre trained with the late great Sherriedale Morgan (1934–2009), the founding father of local boxing, before becoming a coach himself. A compact combination of power and patience, Coach Andre now carries the torch of his hometown's boxing tradition.

Leon is trying to "make weight" for an upcoming fight, but I'm not concerned with making weight or winning any particular round. I'm here to train like boxers train, to grow my physical know-how, to lose myself in the rhythmic movement that's become my "thing," four to five nights a week.

One Sunday, I have the gym and Coach's input to myself. I've been training for a year and half, and I know how to wrap my hands, but Coach likes to do it for me. I like it too, because it gives us time to talk. Just me and the bags; then me and Coach, running drills. He wore the mitts and I threw my punches:

Jab Jab Right
Left Right Left Hook Right Upper Cut
Left Right Inside Slip Left Upper Cut Left Hook Right

"Your right is the trigger, but don't cock the gun. Need that element of surprise. Too much on defense, you get cornered and beat down. Kind of like life," Coach observes, as I dance around the ring, moving my feet faster than ever. I feel fluid in my movement, the repetitive motion becoming rote. Finally, that muscle memory was kicking in.

"Got a little more rhythm these days, young lady," says Coach, who's a couple of years older than me. "A little more spunk behind ya. I like that," he declares with a nod. "Whatever you did? Do."

I'm white, and I grew up middle-class, around sports and neighborhoods peopled by people who shared similar stats. Living in Colorado, my time was spent skiing and rock-climbing, pursuits that left me ravenously hungry and properly exhausted. Searching for a comparable level of exertion here, I found my way to Coach Andre's boxing gym, where boxers from disparate backgrounds train side-by-side.

Maybe it was the satin shorts and fancy robes, or the sleek-looking footwear or all those *Rocky* movies . . . the emotional training scenes, the heroic endings. Whatever the pull, I've always been drawn to boxing. While I've never envisioned delivering, or dodging, critical blows to the head, I'm drawn to the controlled intensity, the fierce, wordless communication between two people harnessing their physical and mental strength.

Black, brown, white, foreign; scrawny; that writer with the crazy hair — once you've grunted together through jack-knife sit-ups, or punched your

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAWN DEXTER

partner in the stomach for three-minute rounds, surface descriptions mean nothing. Once you've shared a ring with someone, you know their name; you feel their personality. You describe them as "friend." We come and go through different sessions, and different times of day, but whenever we're there, we're in it together.

Though I'm not a competition fighter, Coach considers me one of his "females"—like the spunky 8-year-old, the working mother of two, the shy, reticent women around the neighborhood looking to build a different sort of confidence.

"He's helped a lot of us around here," says Jasmine, one of Coach's competitors, whose active little girls are growing up to the whir of jump ropes and the fwap of heavy bags in motion. She's a powerful fighter, and a beautiful one—deep brown skin, big eyes, and a happy, centered energy. For Jasmine and other fighters raised in local neighborhoods, inner and outer strength come together.

Then there's the Burmese refugee who's strong as hell, and the 7- and 8-year-old brother/sister team from Mexico—sister hits hard and brother giggles a lot; there's Manny from Honduras, my landlord's house painter, who gives a boisterous "Hola!" from the ring and whenever I check my mail. There's a preschool teacher and a singer and a hairdresser, and several Marines, who commute from Jacksonville just to train with Coach Andre. There are kids from around Castle Street with timid smiles and good manners who never make eye contact, but hit the bags like they're punching the world.

"I used to have certain times just for teenagers," Coach tells me as he wraps my hands. He nods over at Leon, who's smiling at a teenage girl between rounds of jump rope. When the bell goes off, she smiles back.

Coach chuckles, and shakes his head. "Testosterone and females at that age is just tough." It's his job to keep us focused.

"All right, y'all start together, and finish together," yells Coach. "Stay at your own pace—as long as you keep moving. "

It's time for our group run, a 2-mile loop down Castle, up Dawson, and back to the gym. Coach holds up his blue water bottle and pours water into our mouths, one by one: "Get used to it," Coach told me, my first day, when I'd sputtered water down the front of my tank top. We head out the front door and make our way down the sidewalk, hands wrapped, knees high, feet moving in unison as we pass three elderly ladies rocking on the porch.

"Awright, awright!" said one of the women, cheering us on. "Ooh, look. They got a girl with 'em."

"Keep it tight, baby," the women call after me. "Keep it tight!"

We cut up Dawson and make our way back,

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passing the bright, sharp shapes of the new mural painted along the outside wall of the gym. Coach commissioned a local arts program to "come on over and splash it up a bit," he tells me, with a smile: "Just do their thing."

Back in the ring, we pair up for hand-to-hand drills, geared toward speed, coordination and building those "keep your hands up" muscles. Today's partner, Dwayne, never says much, but every now and then he'll stop and smile. It's a brilliant smile and I've come to cherish its sudden appearances. After a long round of partner work, or a bonus round of heavy bag, Dwayne will come over and fist bump you, the guy next to you, and the girl at the speed bag; everyone in the gym gets a "good job" gesture and a flash of that blinding grin.

After training, Coach calls me over. "Jamie, you're an English teacher, right?"

I teach English to non-native speakers, which includes grammar and composition. Turns out, Dwayne is struggling a little bit with those skills.

"I want to make sure he understands his assignments, you know? Sometimes, tough to know what questions to ask the teacher," says Coach, with a supportive nod.

"It's true," I say to Dwayne. "That's the hardest part sometimes.

Dwayne nods, then stares at the ground, his winning smile tucked somewhere deep inside, replaced by respectful silence and a "Yes, ma'am."

I give him a farewell high-five, thinking he needs to get back in the ring; that's where he comes alive. Hopefully, next time he'll drop the "Ma'am," and bring back the grin.

It's hard to punch someone in the stomach when they're calling you "Ma'am."

***

Biking home to write down what my body can remember, I wave hello to a passing cyclist on Castle Street. His brakes squeal as his bike comes to a halt, and the boom box on his handlebars slides onto his lap.

"Hey! You the boxin' lady, right?"

"Yessir," I reply.

"Awright, awright," he exclaims. "Keep boxin' and stuff!"

Note: To respect the ring and its boxers, some names have been changed.

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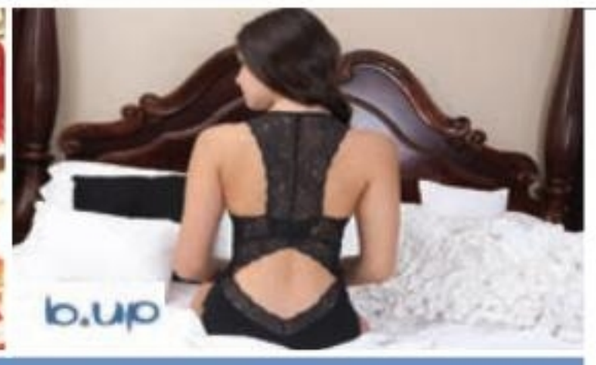

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The Death of Civility

And the only commandment you need to remember

By Bill Thompson

It is with some sadness that I note the passing of what had become known as public civility. I don't mean the social graces like table manners and that sort of thing. I mean the social actions and interactions we exhibit when we deal with each other.

Manners, the social graces, are important because they are a reflection of our attitude toward our fellow man. Civility is the attitude itself.

When I was growing up in the small-town rural South there were certain things I was taught about how to deal with people. Most of those guidelines had some basis in the Scriptures that we learned in Sunday School. I expect that's where my parents got their guidelines and where their parents got theirs, and if it wasn't Gospel when they got it, it became Gospel by the time they told it to me.

For example, there's The Ten Commandments right off the bat. There are all your basic guidelines right there handed down by God himself to Moses — who will forever look like Charlton Heston to me. I know I should say that I remember getting my introduction to The Ten Commandments from a particular Sunday School teacher or preacher but, in all honesty, it was really Charlton Heston's portrayal in the movie *The Ten Commandments* that sticks in my mind.

Anyway, after you get past some of the really strict "thou shalt not's" like "Thou shalt not kill," etc., it all boils down to treating everybody with the respect that you expect them to show you.

I always thought that if you met a funeral procession coming toward you on the highway, the respectful thing to do was pull over to the side until it passed. That's not just good manners, that's a sign of respect for the family of the deceased regardless of who is in the hearse. I don't see that much anymore.

I always thought that children should never "talk back" to their parents, particularly in public. I heard a lady in the grocery store the other day tell her adolescent son to push the shopping cart for her. With a bunch of other folks standing within earshot, the boy told his mother to push it herself. If I had said something like that to my mother when I was that age (or even older), as soon as I could have picked myself up off the floor, my mama would have further humiliated me right there in front of all those people by giving me a proper spanking.

Despite growing up with some rough and tumble characters in the log-woods and sawmills as well as listening to the raucous and sometimes extremely colorful language of men plowing mules, I rarely, if ever, heard a man use foul language in front of a lady. Now, not only do I hear men talking like that with ladies present, but I hear the ladies talk back to them in the same manner.

I'm not going to get into the specifics of current political discourse, since one of Mama's admonitions was to not say anything if you couldn't say something nice.

There is a particular Southern phrase of instruction my mother used to use when my sister and I would leave the house. After restating the time we were supposed to be home, she would always say, "Y'all be sweet now, ya hear." That phrase is the greatest instruction for civility ever uttered. It encompasses all The Ten Commandments and probably every statute in every law book ever written.

Given the fact that The Ten Commandments cannot be posted in a public building anymore, I think it would be extremely meaningful to have that most civil approbation written over the entry to every courthouse and legislative building: "To all who enter here. Y'all be civil now, ya hear."

Bill Thompson is a regular Salt *contributor. His newest novel,* Chasing Jubal, *a coming of age story in the 1950s Blue Ridge, is available where books are sold. www.billthompsondownhome.com*

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Hunt and Peck

Masters of mimicry, spotting the American bittern makes for challenging game, but spring provides a way

By Susan Campbell

There is a large wading bird that calls the marshes of North Carolina's southeastern coast home, yet — unless you search for it — it is likely to go unnoticed. Not rare, the American bittern is simply secretive and extremely well-camouflaged. However, in the spring, when males become territorial, their booming calls give them away.

American bitterns stand an impressive 3 feet tall on long green legs, and sport rich brown and white plumage. Feathers on the wings are intricately patterned, and the throat and breast are broadly striped. This results in superb camouflage within the habitat that they inhabit. A large head and long bill make them terrifically adaptable predators, being able to hunt an array of creatures from insects to small fish to eels, crayfish and larger frogs, as well as voles and mice. Bitterns are extremely patient as they stalk their prey, moving through the tall vegetation ever so slowly. Furthermore, their eyes are positioned to look down, enhancing their ability to spot their next meal, but this gives them an odd cross-eyed appearance.

Numerous in our area from fall to winter, American bitterns arrive from the North to take advantage of the open water that they require during the colder months. Even so, they lurk in shallow wetlands with dense stands of grasses and rushes where they are impossible to spot. If flushed, individuals fly on a low and direct path to inevitably another hidden spot in the marsh. Should an individual be disturbed or threatened, it will freeze with its bill pointing skyward and sway slightly, mimicking the surrounding vegetation. Interestingly, this habit is so ingrained that bitterns will automatically adopt this posture even if they happen to be in the open. This is most likely to occur during the cooler months, during migration or the wintering grounds, where individuals may forage in drier grasslands.

At this time of year, spotting an American bittern is more possible as males give themselves away by advertising breeding territories. Listen for their odd "bloonk adoonk" vocalizations. They are extremely aggressive now and may be drawn to one another from over a thousand feet apart. Males will face off, displaying plumes on their shoulders, and often spar in the air. Females are attracted by the males' calls and, if impressed, will allow copulation. However, unlike many other wader species, males will play no role in family rearing. Nests may be placed in the territory of a male, purportedly so that would-be predators are distracted by their "booming."

American bitterns are usually solitary other than during migration, when they will form small flocks. This factor, as well as their cryptic coloration and slow lifestyle, makes them hard to find, not to mention study. As a result, they are not well-understood. It is, however, agreed that their numbers are declining across their range. Given the precipitous loss of freshwater habitat across North America, it should come as no surprise. Therefore, conservation and restoration efforts of inland marshes, by Ducks Unlimited in North Carolina and across the U.S., and locally by the North Carolina Coastal Federation, are critical for the health of American bittern populations now and in the future.

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos at susan@ncaves.com.

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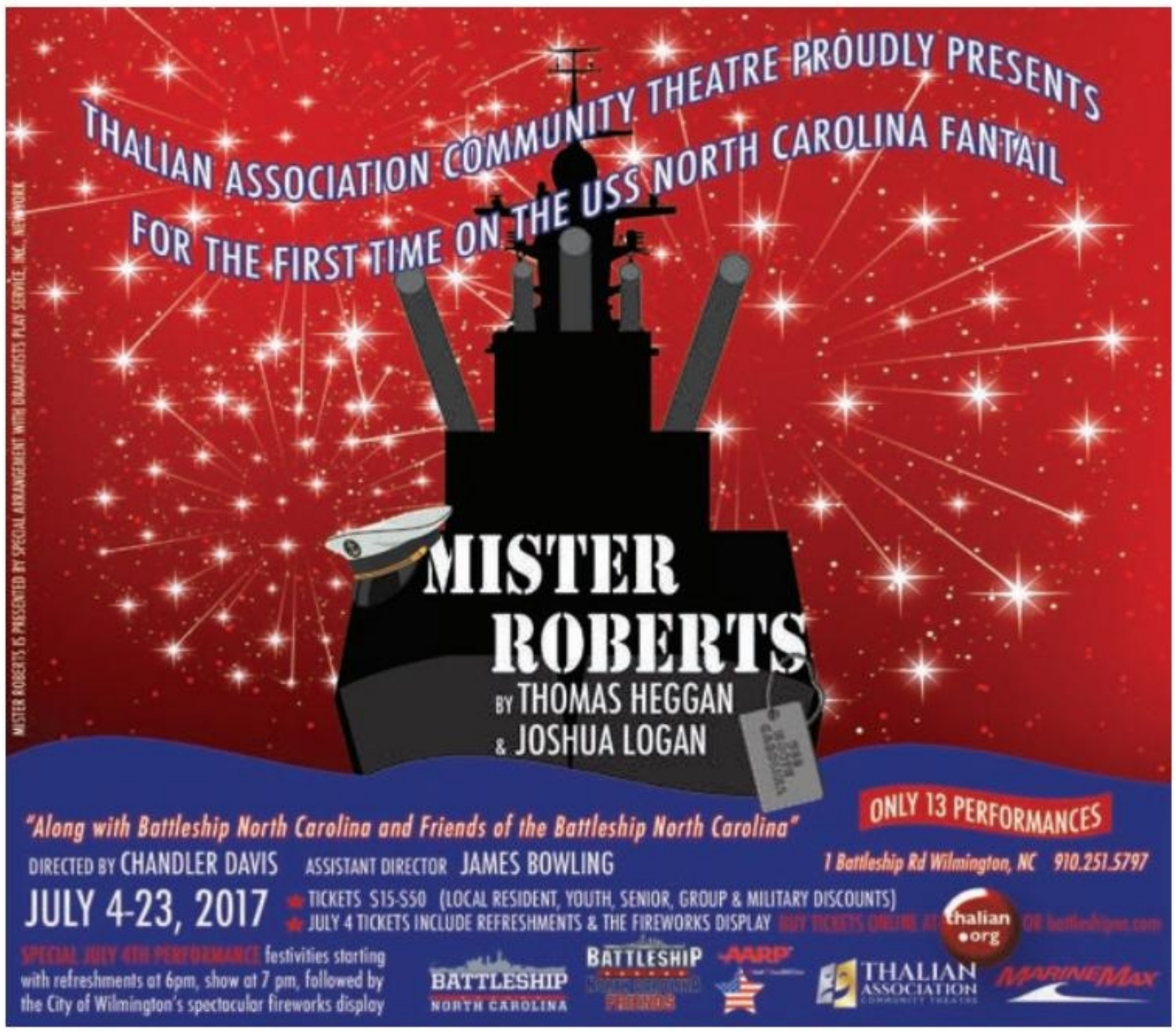
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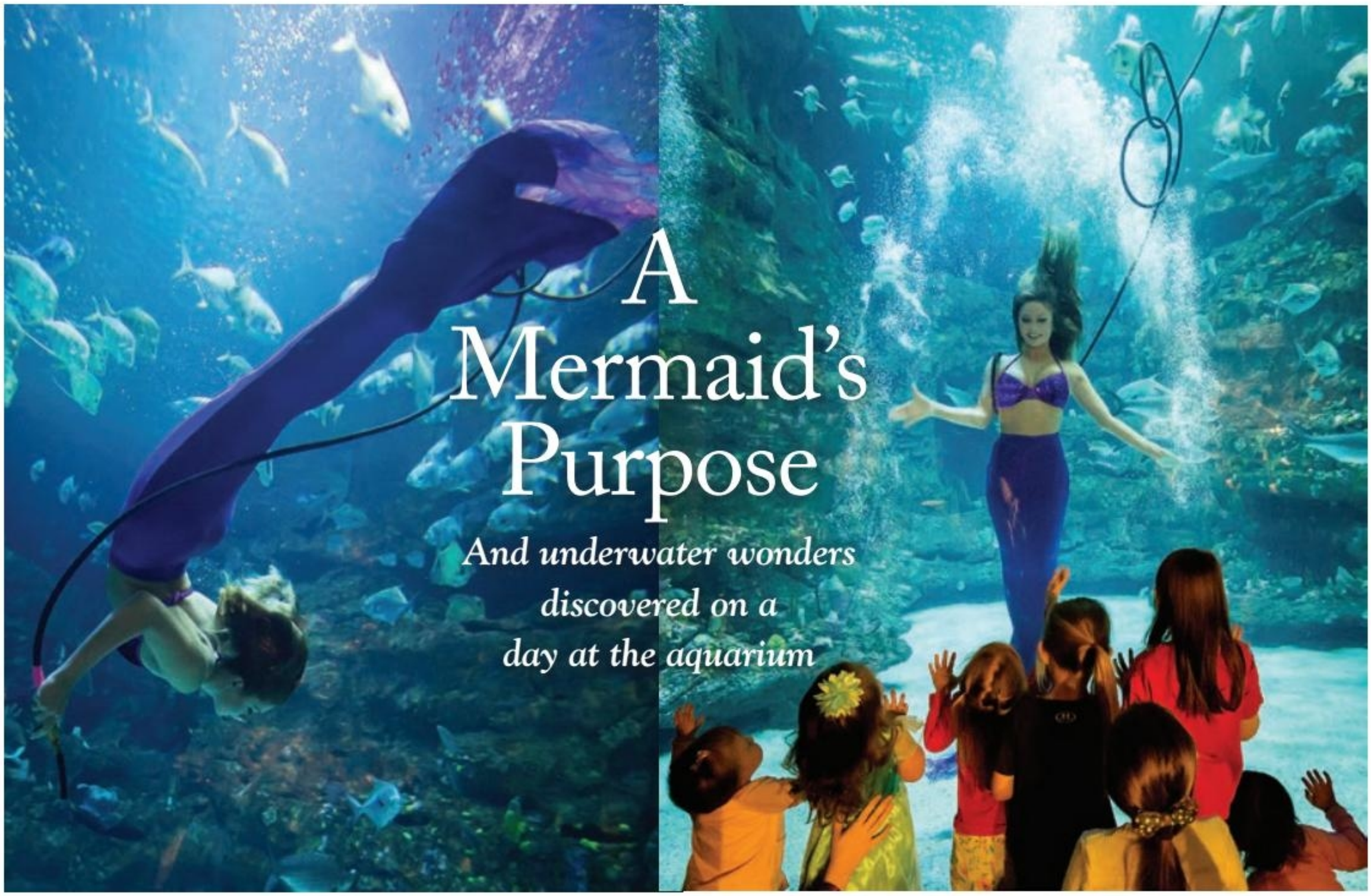

A Mermaid's Purpose

And underwater wonders discovered on a day at the aquarium

By Virginia Holman

When I read that the Weeki Wachee mermaids were coming to the aquarium at Fort Fisher, my heart leaped like a child's. I can't tell you why, exactly, other than, squeal, MERMAIDS! Apparently, I was not alone. Within hours of posting on social media that the mermaids would appear for two weekends in March for special water shows and breakfasts-on-land, the events completely sold out, and families lined up at the doors an hour before the aquarium opened.

Mermaids aren't part of the usual fare at our aquarium. The purpose of the aquarium is education and conservation, and though it hosts all manner of seasonal events for children, such as Trick or Treat Under the Sea, it is in no way a theme park, zoo or fun roadside attraction; it's a place where people of all ages come to learn about our local marine life. But when Florida's Weeki Wachee mermaids decided to take their show on the road to North Carolina to celebrate the 70th anniversary of both their show and the town of Kure Beach, it was hard to resist the appeal.

The first known mermaid story is of Atargatis, also known as Dea Syriae or the "Syrian Goddess," who represented the fertility of the sea. Fish were sacred to her, and it is said that people were forbidden from eating the fish near her temple. Like the Weeki Wachee mermaids, she encouraged reverence for marine life. Mermaids also have a Cape Fear connection. As it turns out, lore suggests the Cape Fear River is watched over by mermaids — though not at the coast. The Cape Fear begins in Moncure, North Carolina, at the confluence of the Deep River and the Haw River. There, a small sandy area became known as Mermaid Point. It's said that in the 18th century, patrons of nearby Ambrose Ramsey's Tavern reported hearing mermaids sing in this area, but that they vanished from sight when the tavern's patrons approached. These Cape Fear mermaids were said to have migrated upriver from the ocean, much like sturgeon and striped bass, so perhaps some do remain here, watching over our alligators, shad and herring.

The morning of the first mermaid visit was festive. The mermaid breakfast was full of families feasting on ocean-themed doughnuts from local institution Wake-n-Bake, and aquarium educators wore shiny scaled leggings. A mermaid magically appeared in a seashell-encrusted throne by the large aquarium where the show was to take place, and she met the children one by one and answered their questions: "What do you eat?" *Seafood salad.* Are you real? *Yes.* How can you tell a real mermaid from a pretend mermaid? *Real mermaids live at Weeki Wachee.* (Truth be told, she was discreetly wheeled out beforehand because nothing hobbles the ability to maneuver on land like a fishtail.)

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

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Once in the water, the mermaids were mesmerizing. They swam in circles, glided, twirled, blew kisses, all while swimming among and in the aquarium's Cape Fear Habitat tank. The tank was full of sea creatures like small sharks, which appeared to ignore the mermaids, and groupers, which were curious about the mermaids' glittering bikini tops. The mermaids were beautiful, yes, but the strength required to swim in 75-degree water, in a mermaid tail, for a quarter of an hour while occasionally breathing through an air hose was impressive. The mermaids always looked so relaxed. Occasionally a child would place a hand against the aquarium, and a mermaid would place her hand on the other side of the glass. They'd appear to touch, a lovely gesture full of delight and longing. Too soon, the mermaids ascended to the top of the tank in a cascade of bubbles; the show was over. There was a moment of sadness in the crowd. They were so lovely, so magical, and we all wanted to be mermaids and swim in the dreamy dark blue sea.

As the crowd broke apart, I wandered around the aquarium from tank to tank. I watched the jellyfish blossom as they moved through the water. Stinging nettles trailed their long, hypnotic tentacles behind them like mermaid hair. I stopped by the seahorse tank and watched these strange creatures, as surreal as the lovechild of Louise Bourgeois and Tim Burton, motor themselves through the water with tiny fluttering fins on their backs and steer with even tinier fins on the sides of their heads.

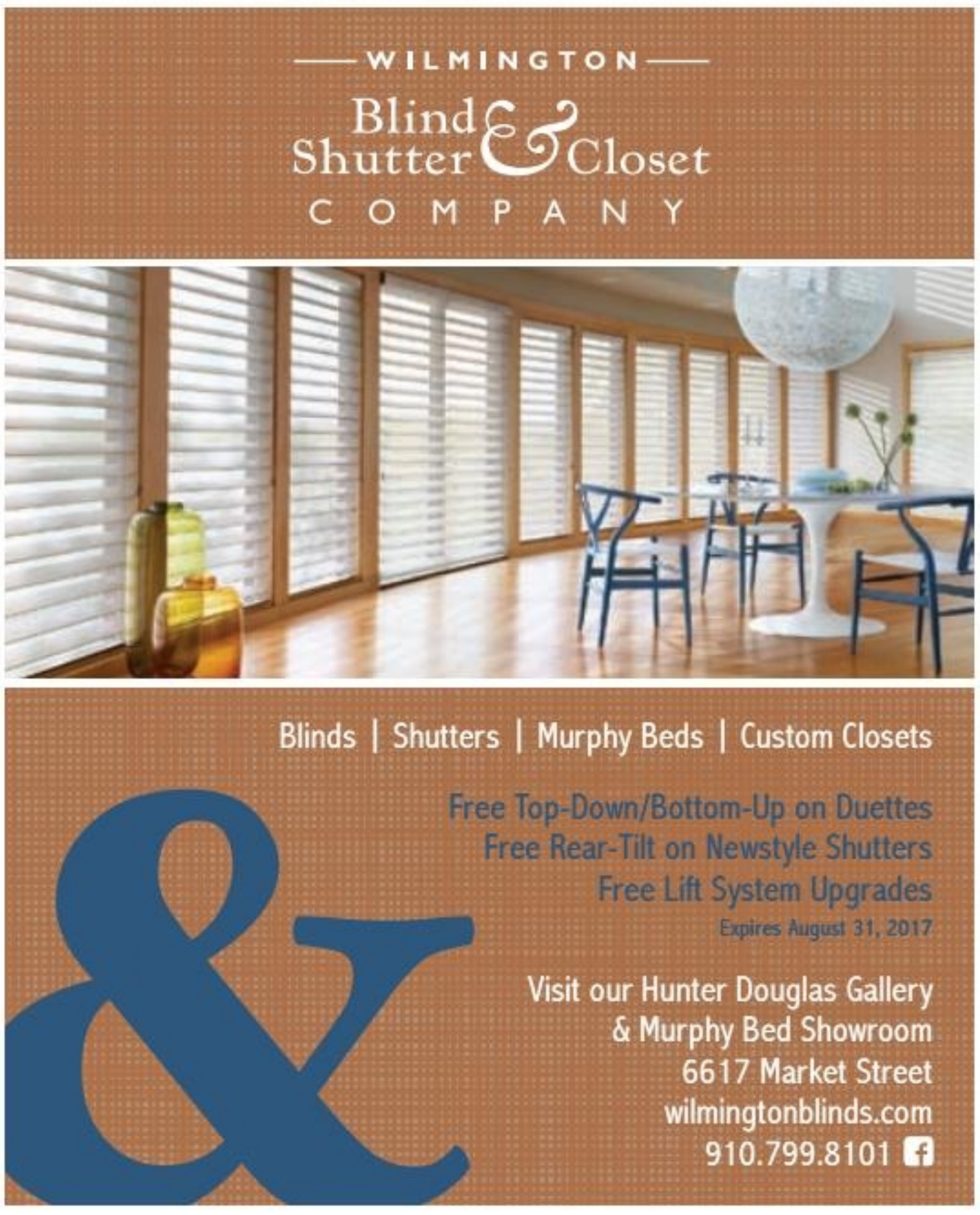
One little girl was surprised to discover that seahorse dads are the ones who carry and have the babies. "They look like mermaids," she said, and wandered back to the big aquarium to look at the Moray eel. It was impossible to look at the sea creatures in the aquarium and not wonder, as we did with the mermaids, what they ate, how they breathed, how they were able to propel themselves in our vast oceans.

Each tank inspires a similar awe. I once watched a young boy learn from one of the many well-trained volunteer educators about horseshoe crabs' importance to birds like the red knot, which travels nearly 10,000 miles during migration, fueled in large part by horseshoe crab eggs. "They even have blue blood," the volunteer said. "Would you like to touch its shell?" The man cautioned his boy to be gentle. One small hand unfurled, and he petted the crab's brittle brown armor, seemingly aware of his human power over this spiky, fearsome-looking sea creature.

Though the mermaids have returned to their home in Florida (until the next tour), there's still a lot to witness at the aquarium. There's Luna the albino alligator, a rarity as alligators with albinism rarely survive 24 hours in the wild. You'll see baby loggerhead sea turtles — just like the ones that nest on Topsail Island — and learn about the hazards they face. Lights on the beach disorient them and put them in harm's way. Under water, single-use plastic bags look like the jellyfish the turtles' love to eat, and once consumed, can starve them. Monofilament lines, like discarded fishing line, can entangle them. The aquarium staff makes sure that visitors know of problems, and also offer them helpful actions. (Turn off beach lights at night; put fishing line in the trash; bring a cloth bag to the grocery store. Encourage others to do the same. It pleases the mermaids.)

I wasn't sure about a mermaid's purpose at our aquarium, but it's clear she serves the same purpose today as she did during her days in ancient Syria: to share a message of education and conservation. The idea, fantastic as it is, that you might see and speak with a mermaid is astonishing as a manatee inviting a small group of humans over for high tea. (Aquariums take note: I propose Man-a-teas next.)

Author Virginia Holman, a regular Salt *contributor, teaches in the creative writing department at UNC Wilmington.*



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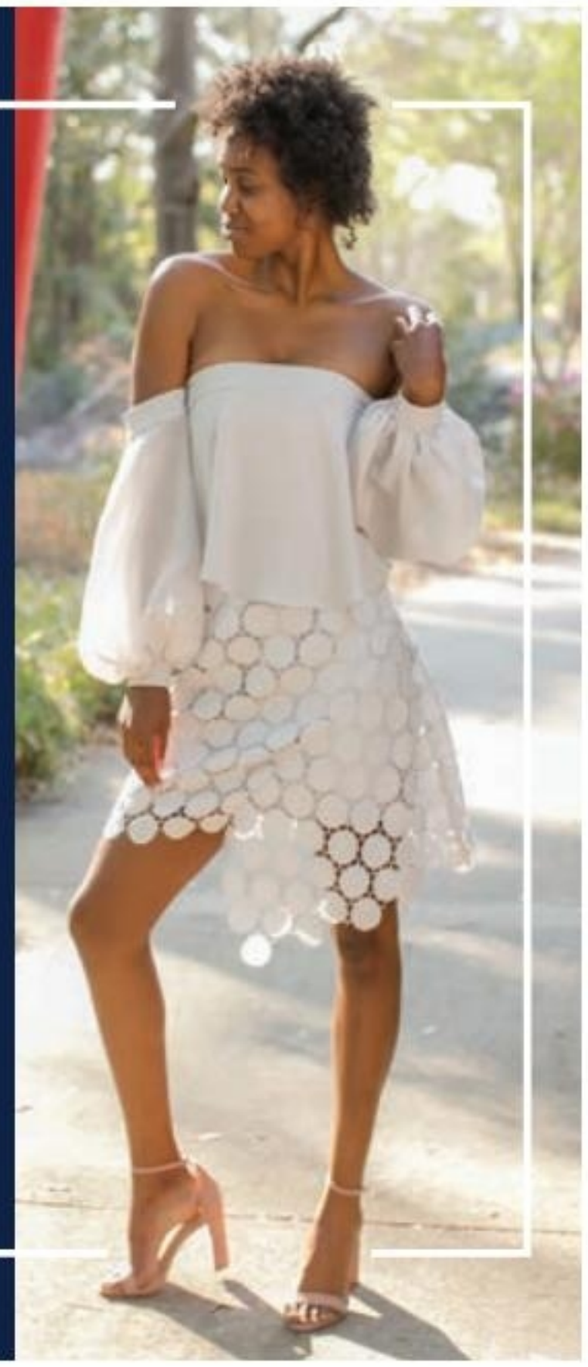

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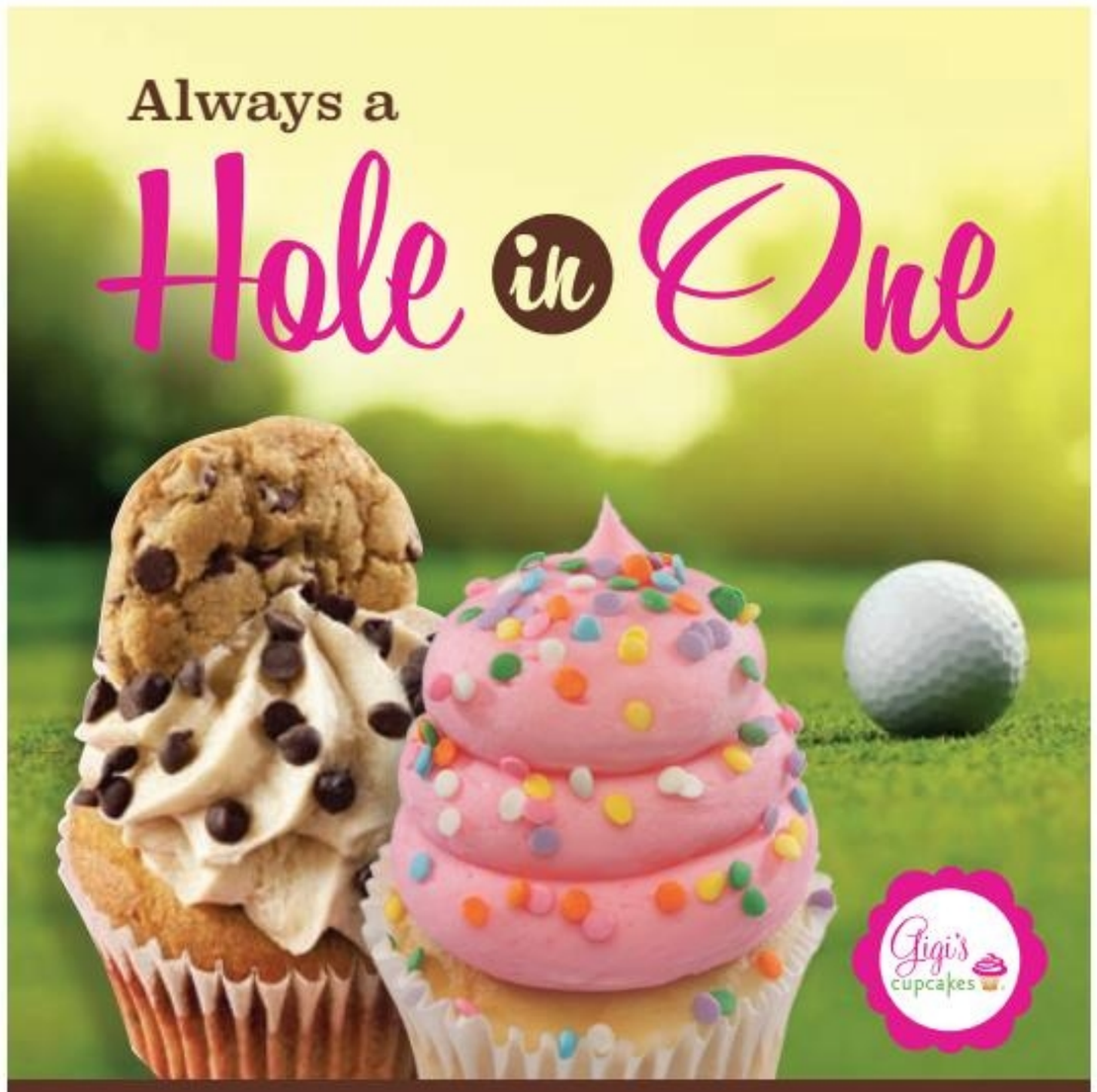

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Things To Do In Golf

By Jim Dodson

Several years ago I made a nice discovery while going through an old footlocker from my mother's attic that contained various objects from my teenage years. Beneath camping gear and a well worn Wilson fielder's glove autographed by Orioles Hall of Farner Brooks Robinson, I found a trio of golf books and a small green spiral notebook marked "Things to Do in Golf" in large adolescent block letters.

The golf books — gifts from my father — were the first I ever owned. They included an autographed 1962 first-edition hardcover copy of Sam Snead's folksy *The Education of a Golfer*, written with Al Stump; a 1967 paperback biography of Arnold Palmer by the editors of *Golf Digest* magazine ("An inside look at the most fabulous player in golf history!"); and a well-worn, water-stained edition of Ben Hogan's *Five Lessons: The Modern Fundamentals of Golf*, the bestselling golf instruction book of all time.

As you might expect, it was a pleasure to sit and leaf through my first golf books, noting passages I found important enough to underline in pencil, remembering what it was like to be a skinny Carolina kid falling in love with his old man's game. My first sports heroes were indeed Arnold Palmer and Brooks Robinson. I'd tagged after Arnold many times at my hometown Greater Greensboro Open (now the Wyndham Championship), and though I would never see Ben Hogan play golf in person, my father believed his instruction book, written in collaboration with the great Herbert Warren Wind, to be the best and simplest analysis of a golf swing in print. As for Brooks Robinson, the finest third baseman in Major League history, the Human Vacuum Cleaner was the person I hoped to be like in the unlikely event that my plan to be the next Arnold Palmer failed to bear fruit.

The pocket-sized notebook marked "Things to Do in Golf," however, was really what brought those memories rushing back. It was a Range Bucket List 35 years before I coined the phrase, begun because I'd read somewhere that as a kid, Arnold Palmer recorded his golf goals in a small notebook he kept in his golf bag. Decades later, when I was working with Arnold on his memoirs, I actually confirmed this with him during an early-morning chat in his Latrobe workshop. "Oh, for sure," he said with a warm chuckle, "I had plenty of big golf dreams in those days. And, come to think of it, I did write them down. I wanted to get good enough at golf, first of all, to impress Pap [Deacon, his father]. Then I wanted to win the state amateur championship. I was probably 12 or 13 at the time. Frankly, I never thought about turning pro in those days — there was no real money in it — though I did secretly dream about somehow winning the Masters or a U.S. Open. I never could have imagined . . ."

His voice trailed off. Arnold was 68 years old then and stood in the before-hours quiet of his modest Latrobe office workshop regripping a favorite driver as he revealed this, sounding almost as dreamy as a Pennsylvania teenager. We'd just begun collaborating on *A Golfer's Life*, a two-year partnership that would reveal his incomparable life and transform mine — a writer's version, if you like, of playing in the Masters or the U.S. Open. Arnold had recently undergone surgery for prostate cancer. His wife, Winnie, had been diagnosed with ovarian cancer. The dimensions of his world were suddenly much narrower and more precious than ever.

He stared off into the ether and more than six decades of memories, then took a moment to compose himself. He glanced over at me, eyes wet with emotion, cleared his voice, and smiled. "Of course, every kid has those kind of golf dreams, Shakespeare. I just never imagined mine would come true the way they did — or go so quickly."

I knew exactly what he meant, but didn't know what to say — and couldn't have found my voice regardless. Suffice it to say, discovering my "Things to Do in Golf" list in an attic trunk a decade or so later brought on my own rush of memory and emotion. The game of golf will do that.

Here's the list, such as it is:

Things to Do in Golf

1. Meet Arnold Palmer and Mr. Bobby Jones
2. Play the Old Course at St Andrews, Scotland
3. Make a hole-in-one
4. Play on the PGA Tour
5. Get new clubs
6. Break 80 (soon!)
7. Live in Pinehurst
8. Find golf buddies like Bill, Alex, and Richard [my dad's Saturday-morning regulars]
9. Caddie at the GGO
10. Have a girlfriend who plays golf
11. Play golf in Brazil

That's it: eleven items, short and sweet. It's obvious why Palmer and Jones top the list. They were the reigning gods of American golf, both of whom had a strong connection to my hometown. Jones's daughter lived in Greensboro, and one of Arnold's early college buddies, Charlie Teague, was my dad's best friend's younger brother and ran the Gate City's best sporting goods store, where I purchased my Brooks Robinson fielder's glove with my lawn-mowing earnings shortly before I got it autographed by the Human Vacuum Cleaner himself at my first Orioles game. Our voyage, Henry Thoreau said, is only great-circle sailing.

The other items on the list were the kinds of things any 12-year-old boy in Palmer's 1960s America might have placed high on his golf to-do list — the forerunner of what, nearly four decades later, I would come to call my Range Bucket List of things I still wanted to do in golf. To this day, however, I have no clue why I was so eager to play golf in Brazil. Might have just been the pretty, dark-haired exchange student in my eighth-grade earth science class. Her name was Juliana. But I can't be sure.

In any case, had a magical genie appeared to me when I recorded this beginner's short list — I place it anywhere from late 1965 to early 1967 — and informed me that I would in time accomplish, in one form or another, almost every item on that list and a great deal more, growing up to know many of the great players, golf writers, teachers, design pioneers, and architects of the game's modern era — not to mention be recruited to help the most charismatic player in the game's history produce his bestselling memoir — I probably would have laughed out loud at such a crazy notion, or simply passed out from pure, glandular teenage joy.

But such is the transformative power of golf. For me, this extraordinary ancient game has not only been an unexpected career shaper but also introduced me to my best friends, and has even been something of a spiritual lifesaver over many years.

Just after I started that first list, you see, I was banished from my father's course in Greensboro for half the summer by a profane and terrifying club professional named Aubrey Apple for losing my cool and burying my new Bulls Eye putter in the flesh of the 14th green after missing a 2-foot birdie putt. This happened during my first-ever round on a regulation 18-hole golf course. I was playing with my father and his buddies Bill Mims and Alex Roberts. Visibly disappointed at my behavior, my father calmly showed me how to repair the green, then insisted that I walk all the way back to the clubhouse and report my crime to Mr. Apple, who unplugged the smoldering stogie that anchored the southwest corner of his mouth long enough to issue a stream of profanity that raised the hair on my skinny chicken neck. He pointed me to the door, warning that I'd better not show my bleeping face around the club until "after the God-damned Fourth of Joo-lie!"

Which explains item number 7: "Live in Pinehurst."

The day after this unfortunate incident, I was moping around in the backyard after church, smacking Wiffle golf balls over the roof of our house with my father's old Spalding Bobby Jones pitching wedge, when my dad suddenly appeared wearing golf clothes and instructed me to grab my clubs from the garage and follow him.

We drove 90 minutes due south from the rolling Piedmont into the lonesome longleaf pines of the Carolina Sandhills. As I recall, my father didn't say much during the ride on that beautiful May afternoon. My (not entirely kind) nickname for my relentlessly cheerful and incorruptibly upbeat father was Opti the Mystic. He was an adman with a poet's heart who always seemed to have some nugget of wisdom reserved for any occasion and who viewed one's transgressions against man or nature as timely opportunities to teach lessons about character and personal growth. Opti possessed an unsinkable belief in the power of human optimism and gratitude that shaped his life and, ultimately, mine, a belief perhaps most tellingly revealed through the life lessons of his favorite game: golf.

It was Opti who taught me the protocols of the ancient game and patiently endured my early eruptions of teenage angst as I struggled to control my hot temper and learn to play proficiently. It was Opti who placed those iconic golf books in my hands and gracefully spoke about the game's "higher properties," explaining how it is both an ever-changing journey into the unknown and a wonderful test of skill, character, and imagination that reveals who you really are and what you aspire to be.

This was pure Opti-speak, a few almost fairy-tale words that my older brother, Dicky, and I heard many versions of while growing up in North Carolina, the code by which our funny, philosophical, straight-arrow old man lived his life. Back then, neither my brother nor I could fully divine the deeper meanings of such lofty phrasings, and especially how they applied to a seemingly simple game like golf.

Our father, for instance, was the first person I heard say that golf is a metaphor for life, with its unexpected ups and downs, unfair breaks, and sudden breakthroughs, a game played by uniform rules of conduct that "apply to all" and that are older (and even more commendably democratic) than the U.S. Constitution. Above all else, it was a "gentleman's game" that offered challenges that tested, shaped, and ultimately "revealed one's grit under fire." The stories he loved to tell about taking up the game in England and Scotland during the Second World War, highlighted by his pilgrimage to the "Birthplace of Golf" at St. Andrews just before D-Day, were magical to me.

Opti even told us how golf was something of "a mental anchor and lifesaver" during those years of war and uncertainty, a game he discovered as a homesick Carolina boy stationed on England's Lancashire coast not far from the entrance gates of Royal Lytham & St Annes Golf Club, where Bobby Jones captured the 1926 British Open title. The club had a civilized wartime policy that allowed American servicemen to borrow the clubs of absent members and play the course for a few shillings. Shortly before he shipped out in the second wave of Operation Overlord, Opti and a second lieutenant buddy from South Carolina hopped a train to St. Andrews just to play the Old Course. I still have a faded photograph of them posing on the first tee, the solemn façade of the Royal and Ancient clubhouse rising in the background. Befitting the occasion, Opti and his pal are both dressed in their Eighth Army uniforms, neckties tucked into shirts, grinning like

excited teenagers. Afterward, young tech sergeant Braxton Dodson mailed this photograph home to my mother, his war bride, a former Maryland beauty queen who was doing her part to save democracy by being chased around a desk by an admiral in Annapolis. At the bottom of the photo Opti jotted in ink: "A couple good eggs at the Home of Golf."

Weeks later, a terrible tragedy occurred at the air base where my father was stationed that prevented him from piloting a troop glider into Normandy, an event he never spoke of until he and I took a trip to England and Scotland during the summer of the 50th anniversary of D-Day to play the courses where he fell hard for the game. It was then and there that I unwittingly exhumed an unspeakable event that had dramatically changed his life and that explained so much about his unsinkable optimism and passion for living, his determination never to waste a day. "Life promises us sorrow," he said to me one evening as we walked together across the Old Course at dusk, repeating something I'd heard him say many times but never before understood. "It's up to us to provide the joy. The game ends far too soon, Bo. But if you're lucky, the journey will bring you safely home."

In a manner of speaking, my own long journey to such opti-mystic awareness began the day after I got booted from Green Valley Golf Club in May of 1966, a golf awakening that began on the beautiful Sunday afternoon we rolled into sleepy Pinehurst, the so-called Home of American Golf.

We drove past a magnificent white hotel with a copper roof drowsing in the longleaf pines, and I saw, out the window of the Oldsmobile, golfers and caddies dressed all in white moving along a baize green fairway while a church somewhere chimed a familiar hymn.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" Opti remarked. "That's Pinehurst No. 2, Donald Ross's masterpiece. One of the most famous golf courses in the world. It's right up there with the Old Course at St. Andrews. Every legend of the modern game has played it, including Bobby Jones, Arnold Palmer, and Sam Snead. Unfortunately, unless you learn to control your temper on the golf course, you'll never get to play there."

With that, he fell silent as we rolled on past the course, leaving me both dazzled and crestfallen.

A few minutes later, though, we wheeled into a charming smaller hotel called the Mid Pines Inn and Golf Club, and my father suggested we step inside to say hello to an old friend named Ernie Boros. He explained that Ernie was the younger brother of recent U.S. Open winner Julius Boros. Julius was Mid Pine's touring professional and my father's favorite golfer. Barely a month before, Opti and I had followed Boros at the Greater Greensboro Open, amazed by his buttermilk-smooth golf swing.

In the pro shop, Ernie Boros greeted us warmly and chatted with my dad about mutual friends from Greensboro. When the subject of his famous brother came up, Boros mentioned that Julius just happened to be on the property that afternoon, and was presently having lunch alone in the inn dining room. Ernie Boros offered me a Mid Pines visor and wondered if I wished to meet his brother and maybe get his autograph. Looking back, I remember how he glanced at my old man, smiled, and winked.

The encounter was brief. Julius Boros couldn't have been nicer. He asked me a few questions about my game and offered to autograph my new visor. He thanked us for coming and observed, as we departed, "You know, son, golf is a game for gentlemen and ladies. It'll teach you a great deal about life and can take you a lot of great places."

Had I been in less of a daze, I might have heard the echoes of Opti's own words coming from the great man's lips. As it was, we then strolled out to take a look at the spectacular final hole of Mid Pines, and Opti pleasantly remarked, "Wasn't that something? You just never know who you'll meet in golf. That alone is a good reason to calm down and behave on the golf course."

He let that soak in for a moment. "Tell you what," he added, as if undergoing a change of heart, "if you think you can knock off the temper tantrums, maybe we can play the golf course here today. It's also a fine Donald Ross course, by the way. One of his best."

With that, we fetched our clubs and played Mid Pines, my first full 18 holes on a championship golf course. To this day, though nearby Pinehurst No. 2 rightfully calls itself the Home of American Golf and is every bit Ross's masterpiece, Mid Pines still holds a special place in my heart, second only to Greensboro, the birthplace of my love affair with golf.

For the record, it took many years (and my mother finally spilling the beans) for me to learn that the unexpected meeting with Julius Boros was a prearranged deal, an artful teaching moment designed by my father to have maximum impact on his hardheaded son.

I never tossed a club or buried a putter in anger again.

At least, not with Opti the Mystic — or, worse, Aubrey Apple — anywhere in view.

The first time I heard the phrase "bucket list" was in the fall of 1999, almost a decade before it gained popular currency from the 2007 Morgan Freeman film of the same name. It came from the lips of my friend and mentor John Derr, the former head of CBS Sports who was instrumental in bringing the Masters to television and who broadcasted the action from Augusta for decades.

We were dining with the great Carolina amateur Harvie Ward at the homey Pine Crest Inn in Pinehurst. I was making one of my occasional passes through my boyhood stomping grounds, ostensibly to sign copies of *Final Rounds* — a surprise bestseller that evolved from that final golf trip to Britain with my dying father — and to give a speech at the Art of Golf convention put on by the Tufts Archives and the Old Sport Gallery in Pinehurst at Pine Needles Resort. The other reason I was there was to interview Harvie Ward for my monthly Golf Life column in *Golf* magazine.

Long before Tiger Woods captured three U.S. Amateur titles, Harvie Ward won two National Amateurs in a row and likely would have secured a record third had he not been singled out and sanctioned by the USGA for accepting outside financial support to play in the Masters, a scandal that sent perhaps the most promising amateur player of his time into a long tailspin of booze and failed marriages and nearly drove him from the game. Marriage to the right woman and a return to Pinehurst, where his amateur career began with an upset victory over the volatile Frank Stranahan at the 1948 North and South Amateur, was, as he'd told me just that morning, "like finding my way home. It was the cure I needed."

Now sober and teaching some of the state's most promising young players at Pine Needles Resort, Harvie was regarded by many — myself among them — as the greatest player who never was, the man whose painful fall from grace heralded the end of the golden age of amateurs and sent a flood of young, collegiate talents into the professional ranks, lest they suffer a similar fate. This included Harvie's greatest college rival, a fellow named Arnold Daniel Palmer.

On the heels of cowriting Arnold's *A Golfer's Life*, I'd been approached by the heirs of Ben Hogan to write an authorized biography of golf's most elusive superstar. In every conceivable way, dark and introverted Ben Hogan was as different as could be from sunny and smiling Arnold Palmer. Yet both men unmistakably fueled my early love affair with golf. And on the plus side of the equation, Hogan's heirs promised complete access to his personal papers, closest friends, and surviving family members, all of whom up till then had kept up a code of silence equivalent to a mafia omerta.

For additional insight on this opportunity, I'd come to Pinehurst from my longtime home in Maine to seek the counsel of the ageless John Derr, then 80 years old, a newsman who'd been a close friend to both Sam Snead and Ben Hogan. Derr had accompanied the ailing Hogan on every step of

his historic fortnight at Carnoustie in 1953, for instance, which was the Hawk's final triumph before disappearing from public view to start his golf equipment company. Derr, I'd been reliably informed by his friend Sam Snead, was a walking encyclopedia on the postwar era of American golf.

Also dining with us that night was Tom Stewart, a former head professional at several leading clubs, Michigan PGA section chief, and a cheerful Scots-Irishman who owned the Old Sport Gallery in the heart of Pinehurst Village. In time I would come to think of Tom's shop as the golf world's version of Dickens's Old Curiosity Shop, and of genial Tom Stewart as the de facto Lord Mayor of Pinehurst. That very morning, as if to illustrate the point, he'd put another beguiling idea into my head by proposing that after I completed my Hogan project, Harvie and I should collaborate on a book about his rags-to-riches-to-rags golf career and call it *The Last Amateur.* I'd even gone so far as to broach the idea to Harvie and his wife, Joanne, that afternoon, and both thought it was indeed time for Harvie to finally tell his side of the biggest scandal of golf's modern era.

"If you're going to write books about Hogan and Harvie," Tom said that evening at the Pine Crest, after learning that I hailed from just 70 miles up the road in Greensboro, "you ought to think of actually moving home to the Sandhills."

Harvie smiled and said he agreed. "You should come take the Pinehurst cure the way I did," he added, explaining that in the early days of Pinehurst, the longleaf pines were believed to emit a mysterious healing "ozone" capable of curing anything from plantar warts to ailing golf swings. He was convinced of the phenomenon's authenticity.

"Haven't you heard?" said the redoubtable Derr in his best broadcaster's voice. "Old golf writers never die. They just move to Pinehurst and lose their balls!" He ticked off a list of famous golf scribes who'd spent some of their best years living and working in the Home of American Golf: Bob Harlow, Dick Taylor, Charles Price, Bob Drum, and even Herb Wind, who returned on a regular basis to see his pal Dick Tufts at his cottage off Pinehurst No. 2.

I admitted that the idea was awfully tempting and briefly recounted my teenage epiphany in the Pines and an old desire to call Pinehurst home.

"I'll bet your father would tell you it's time to do that," Derr said. I was more than a little surprised to hear my father brought into the discussion. Opti had been gone for four years at that point, a loss I still felt keenly almost every day of my life; I missed his voice, his humor, his good-hearted wisdom, and his upbeat take on every bump and hurdle of life.

"You knew him?" I asked John.

Derr smiled. "We started our careers together on the newspaper in Greensboro. That was either 1937 or '38. I was an assistant sports editor, totally wet behind the ears, and he was a local boy selling advertising and writing an aviation column. The war took us our separate ways. But I always liked your dad very much." A roguish smile appeared. "We were both Golden Glove boxers and snappy dressers who had an eye for the ladies. My ring name was 'Dirty Derr.' Don't remember your dad's" — it was "Bomber Brax" — "but I know he moved to Maryland and married a beauty queen: your mother, I presume. Which reminds me, I've just started dating a lovely widow in her late 70s who cooks like a Michelin chef, sings opera, plays golf, and likes to take midnight swims in the nude. Best of all, she can drive at night! She keeps me so young that I've added a dozen new things to my bucket list."

"What's a bucket list?" I asked.

"That's a list of things you have to do before you kick the bucket," John explained. "Everyone should have one, dear boy — especially golfers. "

"I have one," quipped Harvie. "I plan to go back and win the Masters someday. I need a green jacket to complete my wardrobe."

Tom said, "Mine is to convince you to move home to North Carolina so I'll have a regular golf buddy before I get too old to play. Best remember what I tell visitors to my shop — that life and golf are both subject to change without notice."

"That's so true," Harvie agreed, striking a wistful tone. "Better come on home, son, before you reach the final clubhouse turn."

For the rest of the evening, I simply sat and soaked up this trio's delightful stories from their long journeys through an ancient game, thinking about my own bucket list. On the long drive home to Maine, in the spirit of Opti and John Derr, I decided I would call mine a "Range Bucket List" and populate it with things I hoped to do in golf — maybe even including figuring out a way to eventually return to the place where my golfing life began.

Every golfer's Range Bucket List is different, of course — as individual as one's thumbprint or golf swing. That's part of an RBL's endless attraction. As one item is checked off the list, another may take its place. Some dream of playing the planet's top 100 golf courses or participating in a pro-am with their favorite PGA Tour star. Others merely hope to someday shoot their age or win their club championship. Some — like me — to paraphrase Bobby Jones, simply wish to chase Old Man Par until our legs give out.

Since I'm the son of an incurable optimist who believed that golf provides the best opportunities for competitive fun and friendship in a complex world, I've always felt the game to be about its remarkable people, places, and traditions far more than a good score on the card. I have an abiding passion for old clubhouses and vintage courses, as well as the deep friendships and diverse landscapes that have enriched my own peculiar golf IQ along with the game's incomparable history of colorful characters and assorted heroes and rogues, all linked by an incurable addiction to chasing a tiny ball all over God's green earth, discovering whatever adventure lies just around the next dogleg.

At the end of the day, when I look back on a deeply rewarding life in golf that I never expected to have, I can think of no other activity that has provided me more fun and friendship. Maybe it has for you, too. This book is about that, and maybe something more — the highlights of a grateful everyman's Range Bucket Lists past and present, peak experiences and favorite bits of golf lore, unforgettable characters and moments that made my travels through the game so fun and enriching, and even a few remaining "Things to Do in Golf" before reaching Harvie Ward's final clubhouse turn. In some ways, it's simply a universal tale about a kid whose wildest golf dreams, jotted down long ago in a small notebook, somehow came true, and a grown man's love letter to the finest game of all.

Above all, dear old John Derr was on to something when he declared that every true son or daughter of the game should keep a Range Bucket List, regardless of age, because such a list will keep its owner young in spirit and forever "on the right side of the sod," as he liked to say.

And Opti the Mystic was surely right when he pointed out that this splendid game ends far too soon but that it can take you far and bring you safely home again.

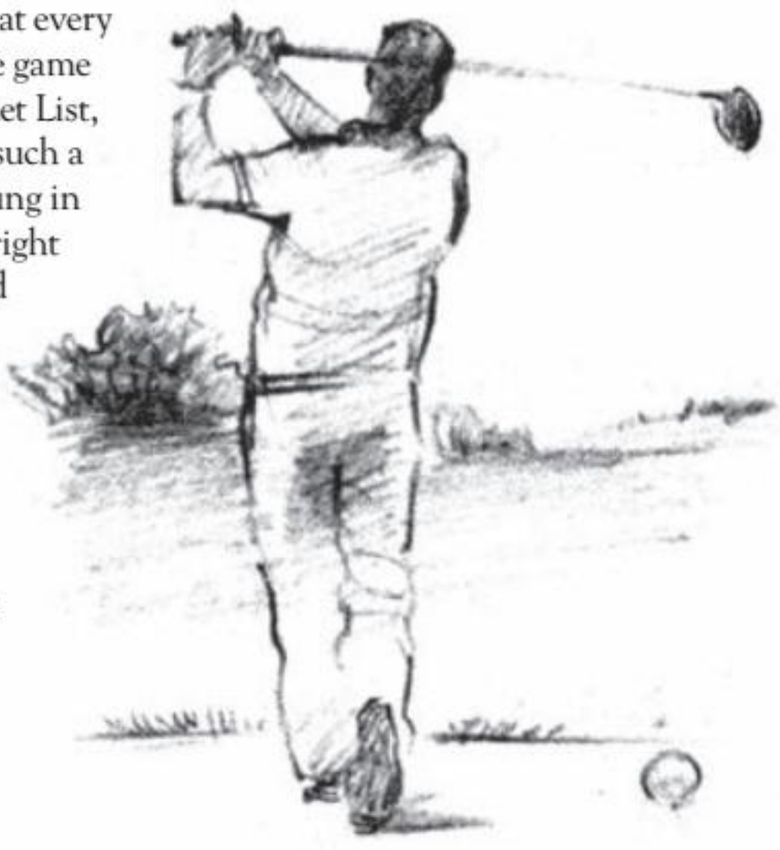


ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY BLAIR

A Good Walk Celebrated

Why Eagle Point is a golf purist haven

By Lee Pace

It was a cold February day in 1997, give or take a year as memories fade, and five men were sloshing through the woods and sandy waste of a parcel of land about 8 miles north of Wilmington. Four were men of considerable wealth and high golf IQs, the fifth considered golf's top architect of the modern era. Together Billy Armfield, Bobby Long, John Ellison, John Mack and Tom Fazio were trying to determine if this tract just across the road from Porter's Neck Country Club and across the Intracoastal Waterway from Figure Eight Island had potential for a new golf course.

Long smiles and shakes his head remembering the day.

"I thought that Tom Fazio, if he did not have such a great reputation, needed some serious psychiatric care," Long says. "Trees are down everywhere, it's raining, it's 45 degrees, it's miserable, it is a mess. But Tom is pointing here and there and saying here's where the first tee's going to be, where the 18th green's going to be, where the clubhouse will be. He's saying, 'Man, this is great.' I'm thinking, 'You're certifiably *nuts*.' Tom saw something none of us did."

Fazio merely shrugs.

"It's just what I do," he says. "Bobby Long can look at a balance sheet and it makes sense, and it's Greek to me. I look at a piece of land and it makes sense."

In time that vision would prove prophetic and crystal clear as the 230 acres became Eagle Point Golf Club, which has become one of North Carolina's top golf environs and this month will be the site of the 2017 Wells Fargo Championship on the PGA Tour. The Wells (originally the Wachovia Championship when conceived in 2003) has been held annually at Quail Hollow Golf Club in Charlotte, but Quail's 2017 position as host of the PGA Championship necessitated a one-year transplant.

Given that Quail Hollow President Johnny Harris is a member at Eagle Point and that Long, now the Eagle Point president, has been the guiding force in the resurrection of Greensboro's spot on the PGA Tour the last decade in the form of the Wyndham Championship, there were plenty of synergies to do a one-off at Eagle Point.

"We thought it was a good opportunity to showcase the golf course, and we want to be a good citizen with Wilmington," says Ellison, one of the four founding members of the club. "We thought this was a way to be a good citizen and help the economy. We like being a great private golf club, but also like being a good citizen. The two don't have to be exclusive. We like the idea the restaurants and hotels and Wilmington will be seen in a way they haven't since the Azalea Open left all those years ago."

"Wilmington has some nice tradition with the Azalea at Cape Fear Country Club, and we thought it would be fun to kind of link back to that," says club General Manager and Director of Golf Billy Anderson. "They looked at some other sites around the country for one year, but Johnny Harris and Bobby Long were afraid if it left the state, it would never come back."

The Azalea Open was held at Cape Fear from 1949-72 as part of the annual Azalea Festival, and now the Wells Fargo at Eagle Point will be one peg in a considerable schedule of big-time golf in North Carolina this year. In addition to the Wells Fargo in Wilmington May 4-7, the PGA in Charlotte August 10-13 and the Wyndham in Greensboro August 17-20, Pinehurst gets in on the action with the U.S. Amateur Four-Ball on the No. 2 course May 27-31.

"Who would have thought a major would be coming to North Carolina and be somewhere other than Pinehurst?" Fazio muses, referencing the Quail Hollow layout on which he's done considerable redesign work over two decades. "It's more proof of the quality of golf in this state. You could take the 18 courses we've done in North Carolina, and that's a pretty good career."

Fazio was approached in the mid-1900s by Armfield, a Greensboro businessman who owned a beach house on Figure Eight Island and thought the Wilmington area was ripe for a unique public-private golf facility — a private course here, a public layout next door, common maintenance staff, equipment and infrastructure, and perhaps homes mixed in as well. They looked at a variety of sites and never found anything that worked. Eventually Fazio told Armfield he knew of a site near Porter's Neck, which he designed in the early 1990s, that might be for sale. But it was big enough for one golf course only — no real estate.

"On that piece of property, you could *only* have golf," Fazio says. "What they wanted was a purist golf environment, no compromises."

The course opened in May 2000 and has grown to having nearly 500 members. It was run for its first decade by Armfield in the "benevolent dictator" manner of clubs like Pine Valley and Seminole, where he was also a member. When Armfield moved from Greensboro to Richmond, he passed the baton to Long. Sadly, Armfield won't be able to see the PGA Tour come to Wilmington, as he died in July 2016 after a short bout with cancer.

But his vision is still intact — a golf-centric club, a full caddie staff, walkable layout and a few bedrooms for members from out-of-town. Some 11,000 to 13,000 rounds are played a year, and only on a few summer holidays does the course get jammed. Fazio built a nine-hole practice course as well, and that venue is the site of a regular Sunday night mixed scramble — you play with someone other than your own wife or girlfriend, and then repair to the clubhouse for dinner afterward.

"We wanted to play fast and play with caddies," Long says. "Looking back, we might have had more money than sense. We did not have a clue what we were doing, and all of a sudden you're into it pretty heavily and can't let it fail."

Fazio built a half-dozen lakes and a couple of streams that run through the course, and the property is dotted with a few massive, draping oak trees so prevalent on the coast. He then planted hundreds of pine trees that started at 6 to 10 feet and are now 35 feet. Fazio and his team moved 2 million cubic yards of dirt, and the highest point in New Hanover County at 52 feet elevation is the 18th tee.

"We took the highs and made them higher and the lows made them lower; that's why it feels like it's fairly rolling," Fazio says. "Construction capabilities what they are today, you cannot tell where we moved earth and did not move it."

Like most Fazio courses, Eagle Point is gorgeous to the eye and not too difficult from the forward tees. The farther back you go, the more inaccessible pins become and the tougher the angles. The three par-4s in the finishing stretch measure at least 430 yards — and two play uphill into the greens — the par-3 15th is 222 yards, and the home hole is a par 5 at nearly 600 yards with a lake to the right.

"The first three holes are a nice way to start a round of golf. Then as you get further into it, the volume keeps going up," says John Townsend, who joined in 2000. "No. 4 is a difficult par-5, and six a difficult par-5, seven a gorgeous hole but a little bit of a breather. You step on the eighth tee, you'd better strap on your seat belt. If you don't get it the first seven holes, it's tough to shoot a good score. The closing stretch from 14 home is about the best five finishing holes in golf."

Adds Long, "Three times I've been 2-under going to 14 and not broken 80."

Long, Anderson and the Wells Fargo staff have worked with Marsh Benson, the recently retired senior director of golf course and grounds at Augusta National, on a number of aesthetic tweaks to the course over the last year. Benson made one key suggestion of moving the originally planned entrance to the tournament from the north side of the property to the eastern edge, where spectators will access the course through the par 3-course.

"The sight views are stunning. Marsh is truly an artist," Long says. "He's enhanced what we had here. I think the golfers and the spectators who've heard of Eagle Point and never actually been will be glad they came."

And that is a vision that only Tom Fazio could see on a blustery winter day two decades ago.

Chapel Hill-based golf writer Lee Pace, who appears monthly in PineStraw, *wrote about the Azalea Open for Salt in the spring of 2014.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY LAURENCE LAMBRECHT

Pint by Pint

Wilmington brews its way toward Beer City

By Jason Frye

Photographs by Andrew Sherman

For too long Wilmington was a footnote in North Carolina's beer scene. While Asheville was earning their Beer City USA crown (three times), while Raleigh played host to beer festivals and made itself into a brewery- and food-truck-friendly city, while Charlotte grew into a Southern beer city, we lagged behind. Why? Not for lack of interest but for lack of opportunity. Despite our dedicated drinkers, Wilmington wasn't a city friendly to beer.

Oh, we had plenty of home-brewers and plenty of beer enthusiasts, but we didn't have a city that welcomed the hundreds of thousands of dollars in investments required to open a brewery and taproom. In our cups by the time our city council and county commissioners decided to unravel the mystery of zoning for breweries, we were far behind the rest of the state.

But now the pieces are in place for the Port City to charge forward!

The North Carolina Brewers Guild works with member brewers here to help raise the visibility of Wilmington. Our own Cape Fear Craft Beer Alliance has sprung up and is working hard to do the job of promoting Wilmington as a beer city. And we're seeing growth in both areas.

Statewide, April was North Carolina Beer Month, which brought festivals,

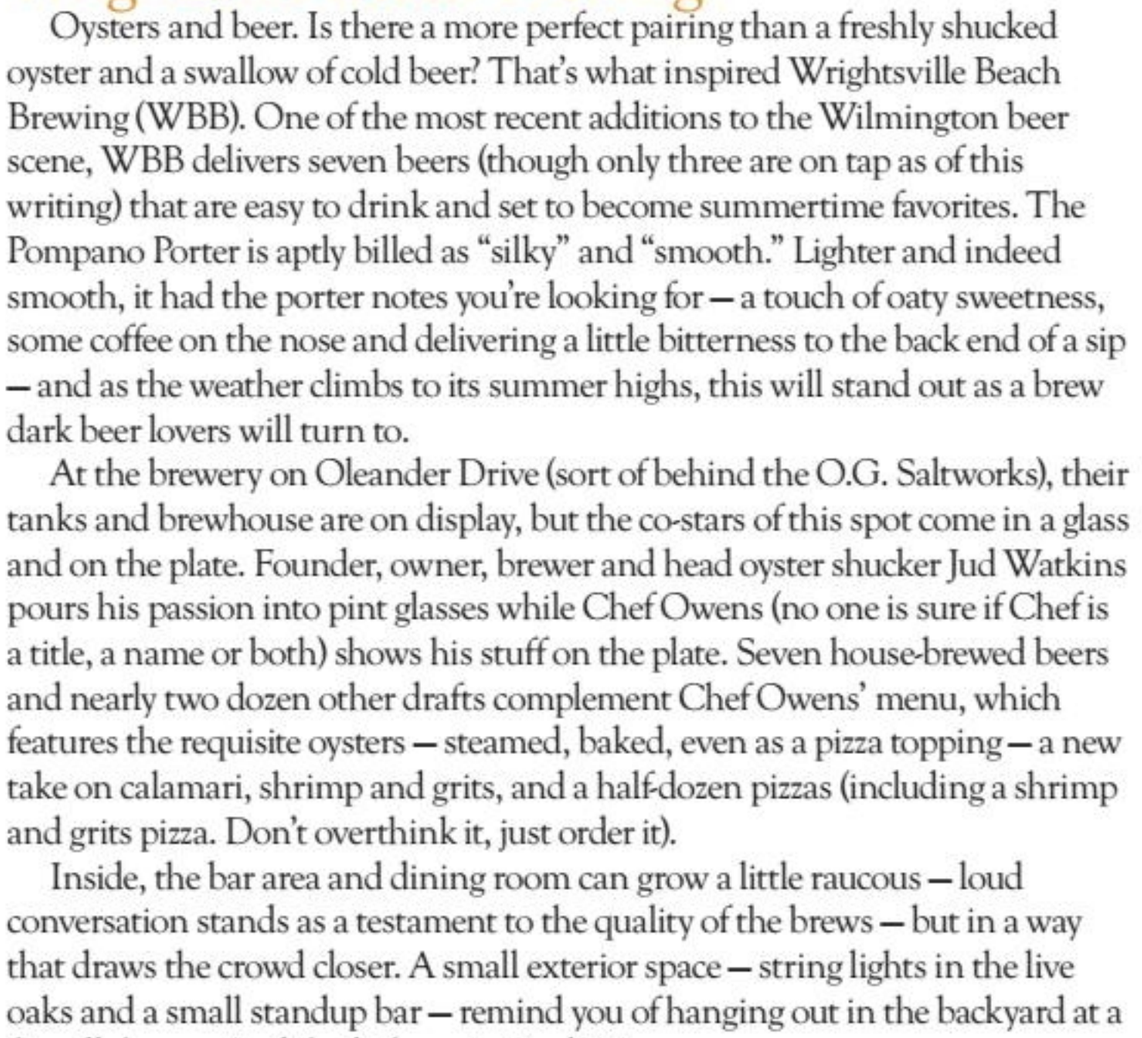
fetes and special beer releases from the mountains to the sea. Locally, the reception was remarkable for Cape Fear Craft Beer Week and the wildly successful Cape Fear Craft & Cuisine, where 20 breweries and restaurants teamed up to present pairings of food and drink in Airlie Gardens. The events were packed, kicking off both Beer Month and Azalea Festival week.

More than just a good time, as a whole, craft beer in North Carolina is responsible for $1.2 billion in economic impact annually. We've grown from 45 breweries in 2010 to more than 190 breweries in 2017 (with more than 50 that will open in 2017 and 18). Locally, we account for more than two dozen of those breweries. For a long time we've been wanting to write "Beersville" on the map by our name, but we needed two things: breweries and a signature festival. We now have both.

Wilmington is a city that loves its suds. We have a thriving home-brew scene. We have throngs of thirsty beer lovers. We have brewers who make magic with a handful of simple ingredients.

Wilmington's oldest, Front Street Brewery, has a new brewer working to refresh their recipes and get new versions of their stalwart beers into the hands of regulars and visitors. Ironclad's new brewer is embracing his role with enthusiasm. Waterline has already expanded. Wilmington Brewing Company is hopping on Friday night. Bottle shops — Bombers, Palate, Fermental, Hey! Beer — have popped up around town. Bars — like Cape Fear Wine and Beer — are finding room in their tap rotations for a keg or two from right up the street.

And best of all, new breweries keep opening.



Wrightsville Beach Brewing

Oysters and beer. Is there a more perfect pairing than a freshly shucked oyster and a swallow of cold beer? That's what inspired Wrightsville Beach Brewing (WBB). One of the most recent additions to the Wilmington beer scene, WBB delivers seven beers (though only three are on tap as of this writing) that are easy to drink and set to become summertime favorites. The Pompano Porter is aptly billed as "silky" and "smooth." Lighter and indeed smooth, it had the porter notes you're looking for — a touch of oaty sweetness, some coffee on the nose and delivering a little bitterness to the back end of a sip — and as the weather climbs to its summer highs, this will stand out as a brew dark beer lovers will turn to.

At the brewery on Oleander Drive (sort of behind the O.G. Saltworks), their tanks and brewhouse are on display, but the co-stars of this spot come in a glass and on the plate. Founder, owner, brewer and head oyster shucker Jud Watkins pours his passion into pint glasses while Chef Owens (no one is sure if Chef is a title, a name or both) shows his stuff on the plate. Seven house-brewed beers and nearly two dozen other drafts complement Chef Owens' menu, which features the requisite oysters — steamed, baked, even as a pizza topping — a new take on calamari, shrimp and grits, and a half-dozen pizzas (including a shrimp and grits pizza. Don't overthink it, just order it).

Inside, the bar area and dining room can grow a little raucous — loud conversation stands as a testament to the quality of the brews — but in a way that draws the crowd closer. A small exterior space — string lights in the live oaks and a small standup bar — remind you of hanging out in the backyard at a friend's house. And that's the point, isn't it?

New Anthem Beer Project

Downtown Wilmington's newest brewery, New Anthem Beer Project, found the perfect place on Dock Street. Comfortable, fun and Instagrammable from every angle, New Anthem's tap room illustrates the brewery's mission perfectly — "to wake up every day and know we are doing something we love." It shows in the space, the music, the vibe and, most importantly, the glass. As you sit at the horseshoe-shaped bar, giant steel tanks of beer let you know it's a serious brewery, and the chalkboard listing 11 of their own beers to sample back it up.

With 11 beers to choose from, New Anthem is going hard. These 11 are known as "The Usual Suspects" because all or most of them are on tap at any given time, but they have more to choose from. There's a pair of seasonals, some funky beers in the works, and plans for limited release and barrel-aged brews. The Rascal Prince — an American-style Biere de Garde — drinks easy. Somewhere between a Saison and Dubbel, it hits with a light, fruity note, a bit of malt backbone and just a touch of bitterness to bring it back in balance. Pistola (de Dedos) is a simple, straightforward Saison, walking a fine line between bitter and malt, but dry with a hit of wheat.

Aside from the A+ beer, New Anthem scores high marks on environment. It's comfortable, it's lovely, and the garage door on one wall opens to the street. A simple bar — live-edged wood — and a few stools give a lucky few prime spots, all while allowing light and air to flow through the taproom.

Bill's Front Porch Pub and Brewery

The sister spot to Captain Bill's Worldwide Beach Volleyball Headquarters (not really the worldwide HQ, but they do have a bunch of sandy courts and feisty players show up on the regular) sits right on Market Street: Bill's Front Porch Pub and Brewery. Once a seafood restaurant, then a Mexican joint, then a banquet hall, Bill's Front Porch has finally settled on an identity as a go-to for excellent pub grub and a slate of beers.

But what will keep you coming back? The wings or fried chicken? A burger or maybe the Pub-Fil-A, a cheeky take on a popular chicken sandwich, but made with fried thighs and topped with house-made IPA pickles? Or something in a glass?

One of each is most likely.

Jim Deaton, Head Brewer, cut his teeth on homebrew systems, then moved to Blowing Rock and Hickory before making his way to the coast. Now he's here and puts out a dozen brews to thirsty customers — volleyball players, spectators, and folks who simply love beer — in a room smelling of malt and hops. Sitting at one of the barrels-turned-tables, some adorned with carved bears — it's easy to get comfy.

And the beer. The Scotch Ale is a nitro, so it delivers a creamy mouthfeel and doesn't skimp on flavor. Their other beers are sounded — carbonated through the natural processes of the yeast rather than by adding outside

CO2 to each batch — causing the formation of tiny, delicate bubbles that give each pint a fine head and rich body. All the brews are balanced out, and even hop-forward beers like the Citra or Mosaic IPA are friendly to those who may eschew the style. And if you're a hophead, they deliver on the flavor and character of each hop variety.

Donnie Stone, general manager of Bill's Front Porch, is excited about what's going on here and around town. "We want to be successful, sure," he says. "But we want Wilmington to be successful, too. I think we are on track to be — in a couple of years — one of the first cities you name when talking about beer in the Southeast."

Cheers. We'll drink to that.

Where can you grab a pint in the Port City and beyond? Here's a broad sampling list of breweries open and in-the-works across the region, a list growing by the year.

Wilmington:
Front Street Brewery
Ironclad Brewery
Flytrap Brewing
Waterline Brewing Co.
Broomtail Craft Brewery
The Sour Barn
Wilmington Brewing Company
New Anthem Beer Project
Good Hops Brewing
Wrightsville Beach Brewery
Bill's Front Porch Pub and Brewery
Flying Machine Brewing Company
Prestige Brewing
Watermans Brewing
Edward Teach Brewing

Surf City:
Loggerheads

Southport:
Check Six Brewing Company

Fayetteville:
Dirtbag Ales
Huske Hardware
The Mash House Brewing Company

Southern Pines:
Railhouse Brewery
Southern Pines Brewing Company

Kinston:
Mother Earth Brewing

Trenton:
3rd Rock Brewing Company

Crystal Coast:
Mill Whistle Brewing
Tight Lines Brewing Co.

Where the Wild Things Are

In the manicured beauty of Airlie Gardens a fox family thrives

By Isabel Zermani • Photographs by Charles English

Crossing my path at Airlie Gardens one day was a flash of orange so quick and soundless I thought my eyes had tricked me, but rounding the hedge brought a fox's tail into full view. Then the fox's body and face and eyes — orange, too, and focused with unwavering precision — until another flash, and she was gone.

My encounter with the foxy lady of Airlie seemed so unexpected, until I spoke with wildlife photographer Charles English who has been following the foxes for years. "This is the fourth generation," says English of the new kits he's seen this spring.

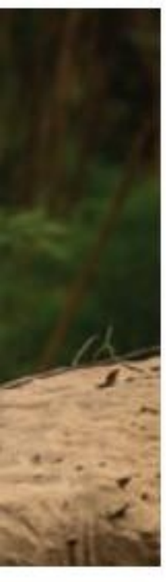
Adept at photographing the most fleeting of creatures — birds — English has nearly 50 years behind the camera, and both the equipment and patience to capture the secret life of the fox family. He's 20 to 30 yards away, "sometimes I'm in a blind" — a concealing tent — "sometimes not," English says. And he's learned to wait. "I've waited three hours before," for one seconds-long chance at a shot. But sometimes that shot is the mother fox nursing her still-black newborn kits or a moment with mother and father fox together — a rarity.

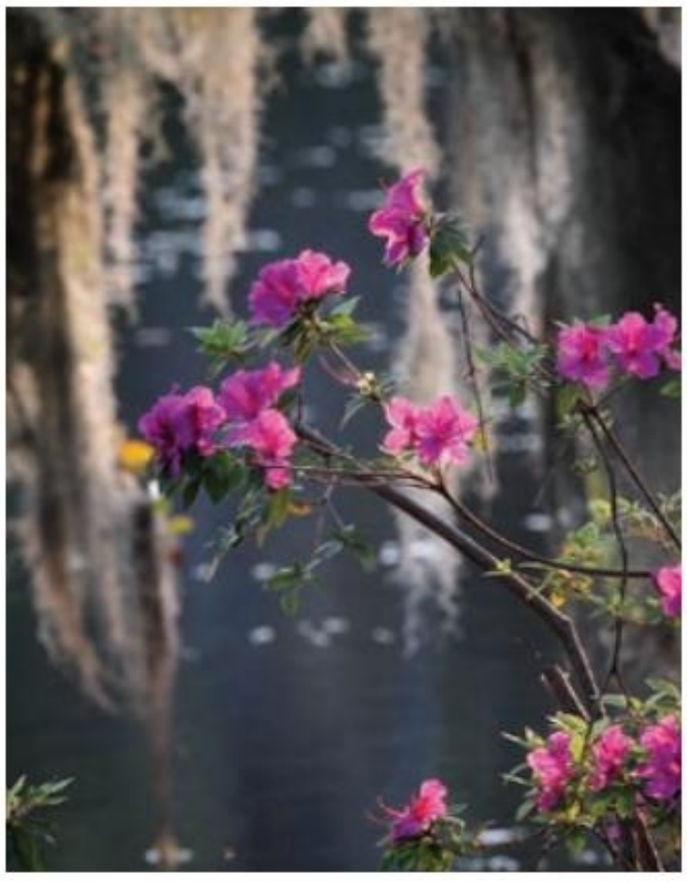
Notoriously private, sometimes the foxes can be spotted in the 67-acre garden and on one occasion, two foxes put on a show as they romped on the lawn. English, a garden member who lives three minutes away, happened to capture the scene.

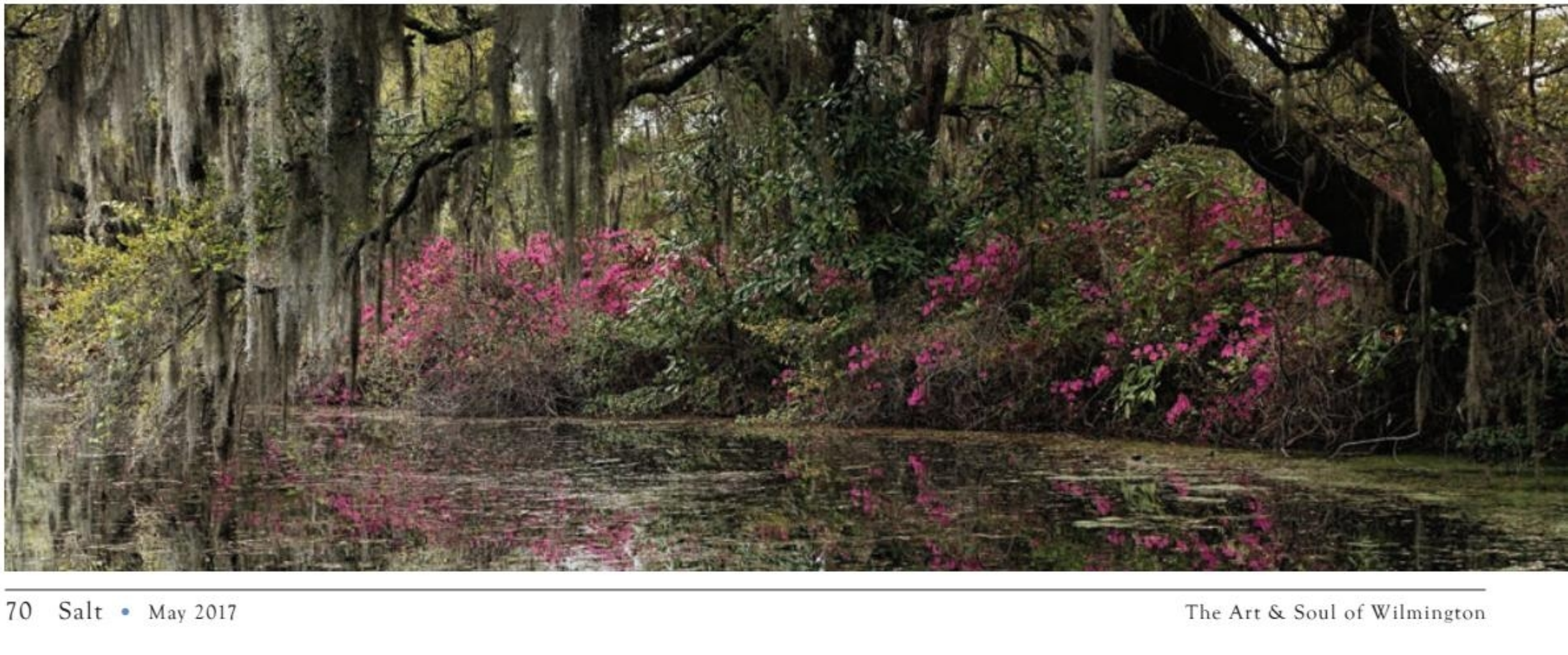
As taken as I always am with Airlie's winding paths, ancient mossy live oaks, and pond bejeweled with swans, I'm enraptured to know that just behind the rows of tulips, just under the azaleas, a different, wild beauty persists.

Airlie Gardens, a historic public garden, is open to the public every day between 9 a.m. and 5p.m. Tickets: $9 (Adults) $5 (NHC residents, military and children under 12) $3 (children under 4). While wildlife sightings are enjoyable, feeding or handling the critters is strictly prohibited. Their policy is to "let wildlife be wild."

Photographer Charles English, an avid surfer and native of Wilmington, is an award-winning wildlife and travel photographer. For more of his local wildlife photography, visit www.ten6.smugmug.com







Water, Water Everywhere

A thoughtful modern estate creates the ideal coastal getaway

By Isabel Zermani · Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

Let's begin with the guesthouse. That's what lendingtree.com founder Doug Lebda, of Charlotte, and Wilmington architect Michael Kersting decided when Lebda acquired an awe-inspiring piece of property on Futch Creek in Porter's Neck — the former house of the Episcopal Bishop, Right Reverend Thomas Henry Wright. Situated so uniquely, the property sits on a knob in the creek, which snakes around it, surrounding the house with water on three sides. At high tide, you feel like you're floating.

"We call this place 'On Water'," says Kersting. Standing in the all-glass first floor living room gazing out at Rich's inlet or the steps-away wet-deck pool, one can see why. "It's almost like an aquarium," says Kersting, but floor-to-ceiling sheers can slide across hidden tracks to diffuse the light or create privacy. An open kitchen with quartz countertops and rift cut oak cabinetry overlooks the aquarium. Painted glass as a backsplash recalls the impossibly still ocean in August or a clear blue sky.

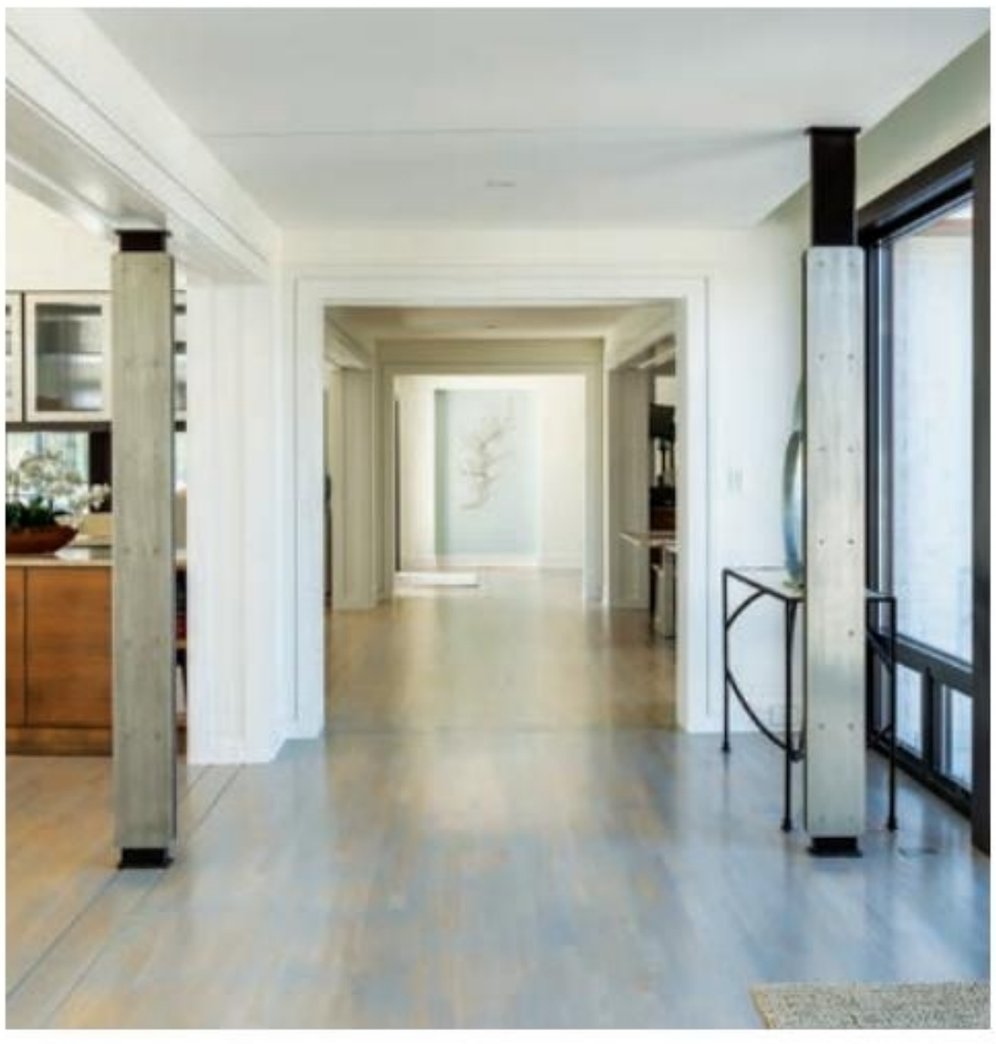
The master bedroom feels like a proper Captain's quarters, but it's the second floor that

stuns. "The entire second floor comes down on four steel columns," says Kersting emphasizing, "this is a 12-foot cantilever." It doesn't take an architect to appreciate the engineering necessary to suspend the upstairs two bedrooms that far out, giving unimpeded water views downstairs and a cloud-like experience upstairs.

Kersting posits the idea that good architecture is like good food: "There are very few ingredients, you just pick the right ingredients." There's an effortless confidence that pervades when each element works in harmony: rift cut oak, glass, raw concrete floors, painted steel beams.

This ultra-modern nautical guesthouse demonstrates the mastery of efficiency that's so satisfying — pocket doors, built-in cabinets, custom queen-sized bunk beds with a ladder that vanishes inside the frame itself — each challenge met and achieved.

"Earlier, Doug had wanted to do something more traditional, cottage-y," says Kersting who is best known for modernism. "I had asked Michael to design something without any real restrictions or guidance from me," says Lebda, "something that he envisioned as both an artist and an architect." Carte blanche doesn't always end up with both parties happy, but Kersting promptly sketched out "On Water" and showed it to Lebda. "I was hooked," says Lebda. They set their course to Modern. With both AIA (American Institute of Architects) and Matsumoto (North Carolina Modernist Houses) awards won, it's certain their course correction was a wise one. The family's full-time Quail Hollow home in Charlotte is more traditional, says Megan Greuling, Lebda's wife, "Wilmington is our modern 'getaway' place."



If the guesthouse was the prototype, extrapolating that aesthetic to the main house presented a challenge: to keep the footprint of the house as large as desired, they'd have to adapt the previous 1966 ranch-style structure.

"This house is not about high ceilings," says Kersting with a laugh. What ranch is? Opting to play up the horizontals and install floor-to-ceiling glass walls, towering heights is not something to miss in this home. "We aimed to really blur the lines between outdoors and indoors." And what you want to see is the horizon. The living room's east and west-facing walls are all glass, showcasing the meandering creek and the unique position in the natural world. "We're fortunate enough to see both sunsets and sunrises reflecting over water," says Greuling. There's so much light, one could practically have a functioning sundial in this room. The original fireplace from the Bishop's house is the only original element, "a little honoring the past."

The Bishop of East Carolina (1904–1997) and his wife, Hannah (1916–2001), built the original home and lived out their golden years on this property, where author, historian and friend Susan Taylor Block remembers, "There was so much laughter in that house." A native of Wilmington, born to one of our town's most important families, Thomas Henry Wright was baptized at Saint James Episcopal Church where he would later serve. In his career, the Bishop traveled worldwide for the church, sometimes risking his life to carry out missions in Vietnam or Liberia, but spent most of his time in eastern North Carolina. He helped restore Saint James' Mt. Lebanon Chapel in present day Airlie Gardens that was once the Wright family estate.

Central to the home is the formal dining room. An eat-in kitchen features a travertine "dry-island" where the family can pull up a stool for snack post-swim, but the home is — with a second scullery kitchen — poised for a dinner party. Suspended from the ceiling (the highest in the house, only second to the lanai) is what can only be called an art installation by New York blown-glass collective Shakuff. "Chandelier" just doesn't describe the series of dangling illuminated glass globes reminiscent of a bloom of jellyfish. The lady of the house chose a pair of expressive oyster shell paintings to frame the patio doors, the pool view.

Another door from the dining room leads to perhaps the world's largest screened-in porch, the family's favorite room in the house. "The views of the water are unbeatable," says Lebda. Here's where the ceiling reaches up at an impressive angle, mirroring the second floor of the guesthouse. Seamless wrap-around tiled porches extend from the porch and trace nearly the whole perimeter, offering any number of places to lounge, curl up with a book, or birdwatch.

If entertaining is more on your mind, step over to the cabana. Play bartender at the poured concrete countertops and draw one off the built-in keg tap. The Ledba family may be watching the Wells Fargo Championship in person, but the cabana's flatscreens could keep one up to date in comfort. Plus, you can watch from the hot tub. Outdoor showers and a garage-turned-game-room remind us this is a beach house, though the appearance is so stately.

Outside, the long driveway connects to the front walk by way of long, skinny gray pavers, inspired by The Highline in New York City. The driveway circles none other than a putting green. When not catching a round at nearby Eagle Point Golf Club — "I joke that it's my 'happy place'" — Lebda can practice his short game at home.

Bright white brick and dark mahogany stain — meant for log cabins — creates a nautical elegance inspired by classic "Riva and Chris Craft boats," notes Kersting. Trained hedges disguise the retaining walls and give the estate an air of propriety. But just before you drift

off on an Italian garden daydream, the stair-step Bermuda roofline locates us firmly on the water with that island feel.

Situated creekside with a private porch under a cantilevered extension, echoing the guesthouse, is the master suite. (It's a short walk to the sunset viewing deck, the fire pit, or the dock.) Inside, a new texture emerges, an entire wall covered in velvet resembling a giant headboard. Simple, oversized furniture offers a soothing ambiance. As a trick to give a sense of depth to the ceiling, Kersting dropped the edges, recessed the lights, and painted the highest plane dark umber.

In the hallway, hidden away, is a small, built-in desk where cufflinks can be removed, letters written, and keepsakes kept. Also a mini-bar disguised as a dresser, keeps a cool drink on a hot day just a few steps away.

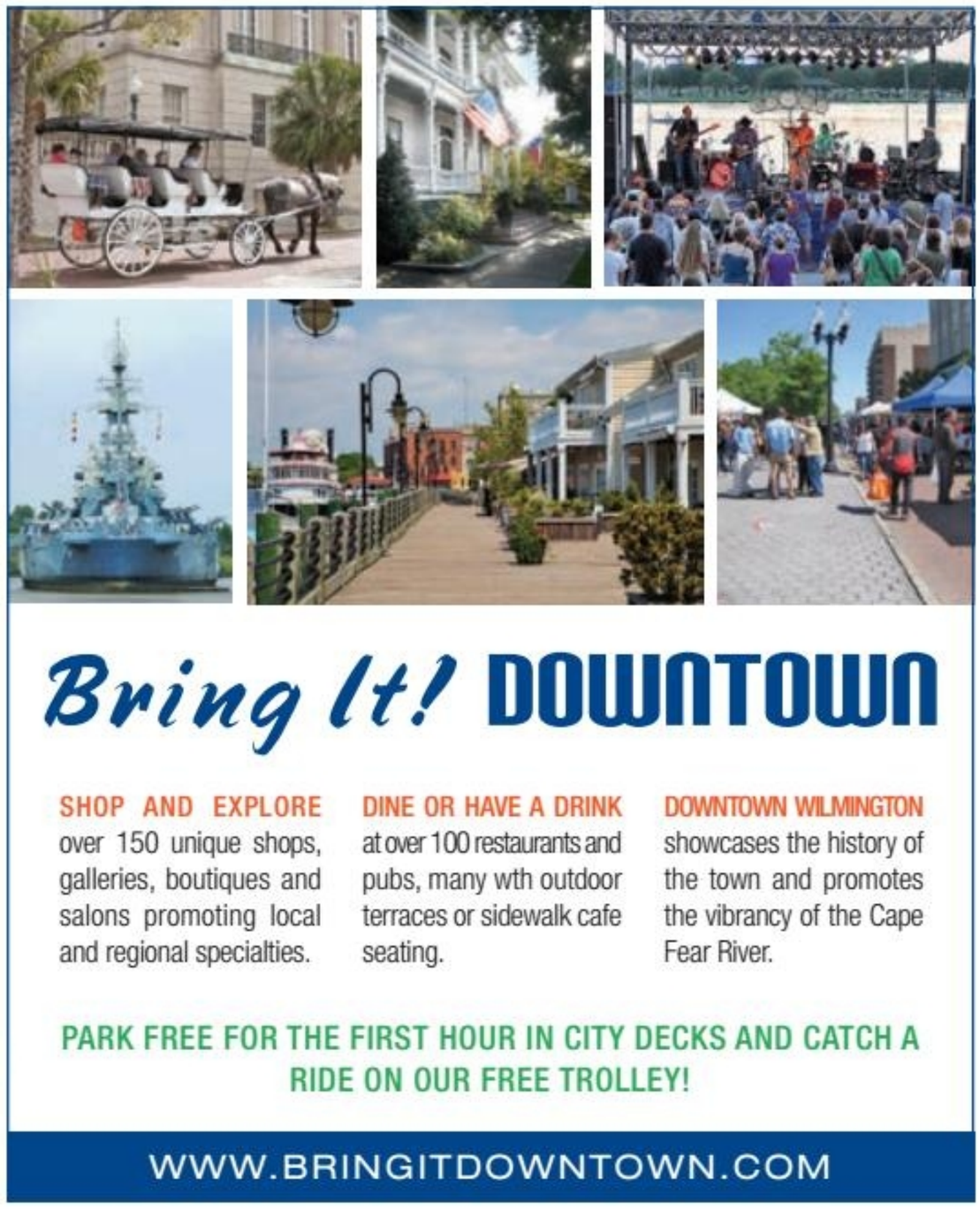
His and hers closets, and his and hers sinks and toilets — "a democratic bathroom" as Kersting puts it — offer the serenity of symmetry. The centerpiece of the master bathroom is the "wet room," where the shower and tub are housed together for a spa experience. Here, one could spend all day. No, seriously, there's Netflix in there. Kersting is quick to sing the praises of Bluewater surfaces for their stonework. Grueling is quick to credit Jane

from Paysage Home and Julie Bray from Luxe Home Interiors Wilmington for "furniture pieces, floor coverings and accents" to add to Lebda's modern furniture collection from his days in New York.

Color makes few appearances, save for the three children's rooms which feature wall coverings, ceilings or drapery in bright pinks, grass greens, and yellows. Tasteful, bold choices personalize the daughter's rooms. A garage-turned-home-theater bears a darker palate, a projection screen, and an over-sized leather wrap around couch, apt for a rainy summer afternoon movie. Another room guests can look forward to is the powder room: a perfectly designed, chic room with metallic gold geometric wallpaper and a pair of stunning up-close watercolors of the rings inside a tree.

Though guests of the North Carolina Modernist Houses coastal tour spring party, held this year at "On Water," will likely be more interested in the cantilevers. "On Water" won NCMH's 2014 George Matsumoto prize for residential modern architecture, which Lebda proudly displays in the master bedroom.

George Smart, Board Chair of NCMH, speaks of the paradoxical state of architecture in the modern south: At the same time as many Southerners "want our homes to look like our grandparents'," North Carolina has the third largest number of modern homes in the country. Most of these are located in the triangle, a result of NC State University's architecture school founded by design guru Henry Leveke Kamphoefner. Some graduates, like Kersting, meander south and east until they hit water.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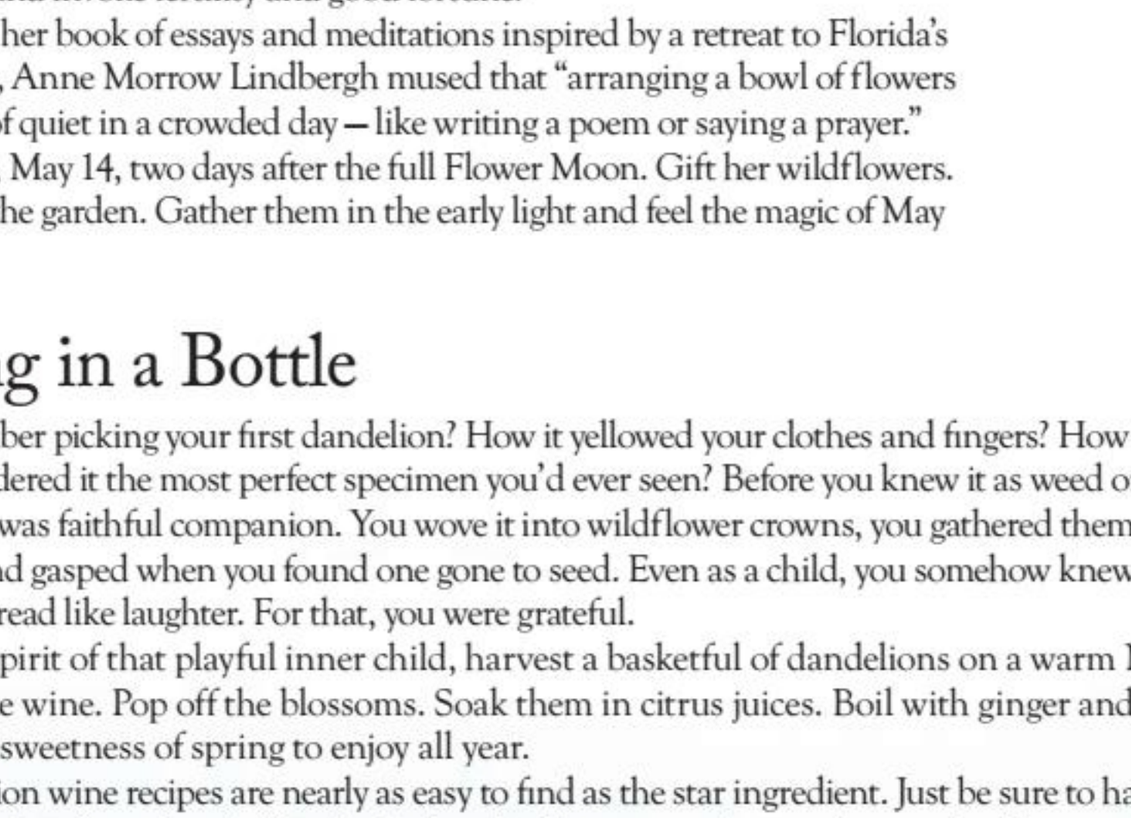
ALMANAC

May

By Ash Alder

I perhaps owe having become a painter to flowers. –Claude Monet



May is a month of magic. A single flower is proof. But the Earth spills fragrant blossoms with the fervor of a child in a spring wedding, hands dipping into that shaky wicker basket until the aisle resembles a sea of brush strokes — a Monet painting come to life.

May is a month of abundance. Plump strawberries. Rhubarb pie. Tomato vines winding up rustic garden trellises.

On May 1, an ancient fire festival called Beltane celebrates this fertile season with feasts and rituals. Midway between the spring equinox and summer solstice, Beltane was traditionally a celebration of light that marked the beginning of summer, a Gaelic May Day festival during which cattle were led between two sacred fires, the smoke from which was said to purify and shield the herd from disease before they were driven into open pasture. Villagers and couples danced round and leapt over the flames to cleanse their souls and invoke fertility and good fortune.

May is a month of flowers. In her book of essays and meditations inspired by a retreat to Florida's Captiva Island in the early 1950s, Anne Morrow Lindbergh mused that "arranging a bowl of flowers in the morning can give a sense of quiet in a crowded day — like writing a poem or saying a prayer."

Mother's Day falls on Sunday, May 14, two days after the full Flower Moon. Gift her wildflowers. A sprig of dogwood. Irises from the garden. Gather them in the early light and feel the magic of May pulsing within them.

The May Bush

The first maypoles were made of hawthorn, a mystical tree whose pale blossoms represent hope and supreme happiness. Also called thornapple, hawberry and May bush, the ancient Celts believed this magical tree could heal a broken heart. If you stumble upon a wild hawthorn, especially one growing among ash and oak, legend has it you have found a portal to the faerie realm.

The Celts sure love their nature spirits. According to Celtic tree astrology, those born from May 13 – June 9 draw wisdom from the sacred hawthorn. Creative and charismatic, hawthorn types are often found performing for a crowd. They're most compatible with ash (Feb. 18 – March 17) and rowan signs (January 21 – Feb. 17).

And wouldn't you know it? The hawthorn is one of two birth flowers of May, the other being lily of the valley — less fabled but far more fragrant.

Spring in a Bottle

Remember picking your first dandelion? How it yellowed your clothes and fingers? How its tiny florets rendered it the most perfect specimen you'd ever seen? Before you knew it as weed or edible, dandelion was faithful companion. You wove it into wildflower crowns, you gathered them for Mother, and gasped when you found one gone to seed. Even as a child, you somehow knew that dandies spread like laughter. For that, you were grateful.

In the spirit of that playful inner child, harvest a basketful of dandelions on a warm May evening. Make wine. Pop off the blossoms. Soak them in citrus juices. Boil with ginger and clove. Bottle the sweetness of spring to enjoy all year.

Dandelion wine recipes are nearly as easy to find as the star ingredient. Just be sure to harvest from someplace free of pesticides. And when the blossoms stain your fingers, don't be surprised by a sudden impulse to turn a cartwheel or somersault across the lawn.

Weeds are flowers too, once you get to know them.

—A. A. Milne

Arts Calendar

Flower Crown Workshop

5/7

Yoga Teacher Training

5/11-14

Book Talk

5/15

5/1–7 Wells Fargo Championship
Schedule available online. One of the largest, most prestigious sporting events in North Carolina and an unforgettable golf experience. The PGA Tour event features the top professional golfers in the world and includes a pro-am and four-day tournament. Admission: $30–165. Eagle Point Golf Club, 8131 Bald Eagle Lane, Wilmington. Info: (800) 945-0777 or Wilmington.wellsfargochampionship.com.

5/1–9 Jewish Film Festival
7 p.m. Annual film festival featuring award-winning feature films and selected shorts offering unique perspectives on Jewish identity, customs, rituals, history and contemporary global politics. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtonjff.org.

5/1–6 Plein, but not Plain
Once again the painters take to the historic streets of downtown Wilmington for a week to paint plein air culminating in an open air gallery in Bijou Park at 200 North Front Street on 5/6 from 10 a.m.–2p.m. Artists may enter their works in the contest for cash prizes. Fee to enter for adult artists $30, youth division is free. Info: http://artscouncilofwilmington.org

5/2 Greenfield Lake Concert
7 p.m. American folk-rock band Dawes performs live at Greenfield Lake. Admission: $27–32. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

5/2 & 3 Live Theatre
7:30 p.m. *Dirty Dancing*, the classic story on stage is an unprecedented live experience, with heart-pounding music, passionate romance, and sensational dancing. Admission: $46–105. Wilson Center, 703 North Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or www.capefearstage.com

5/4 Women of Achievement Awards
Fundraiser for the Lower Cape Fear YWCA honoring the accomplishments of women and young leaders in the Port City. Includes social hour, refreshments and awards ceremony. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 799-6820 or www.ywca-lowercapefear.org.

5/5 Greenfield Lake Concert
6 p.m. Big Something performs live at Greenfield Lake fusing elements of rock, pop, funk and improvisation. Admission: $21. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

5/6 Pender County Spring Fest
8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Homegrown, handmade festival featuring food, music and dancing, arts and crafts, children's activities, area vendors and all-day entertainment. Pender County Courthouse Square, 100 South Wright Street, Burgaw. Info: (910) 259-4844 or www.visitpender.com/events.

5/6 Eastern Bluebird
9:15 a.m. – 2 p.m. Learn all about the Eastern bluebird and how to attract them to nest in your yard. A variety of native plants will also be for sale out on the sidewalk. Wild Bird & Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com

5/6 Day in the Sun
9 a.m. – 1 p.m. A fishing tournament, "Fishin' with Special Friends," and a chance for fun in the sun for special needs friends and their families to enjoy the outdoors. Johnnie Mercer's Pier, Wrightsville Beach. Info: http://fishingwithspecialfriends.com

5/6 Safari Hunt
9 a.m. Underwater scavenger hunt through a shipwreck with $4,000 in prizes and a cookout to follow. Admission: $20–25. Liberty Ship Marina, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 392-4386 or www.aquaticsafaris.com/safari-hunt.

5/6 MS Walk
9 a.m. Four-mile walk connecting people living with MS and those who care about them. Proceeds benefit the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. Greenfield Lake Park, 301 Willard Street, Wilmington. Info: www.nationalmssociety.org.

5/6 Live Theatre
7:30 p.m. The New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players present *H.M.S. Pinafore*, about a lowly sailor who has fallen for the Captain's daughter when she has been promised to someone else. Admission: $36–64. Wilson Center, 703 North Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or www.capefearstage.com

Birding & Kayak Adventure

5/17

Battleship Alive

5/20

Orange Street Arts Fest

5/27-28

5/6 Underground Railroad Book Talk
1 – 3p.m. In their book, *Slaves Escapes & the Underground Railroad in North Carolina*, authors Tim Allen and Steve Miller used harrowing historical firsthand accounts to investigate how African Americans escaped oppression in a dark chapter of Tarheel State history. They will discuss and read from their book. Burgwin-Wright Museum and Gardens, 224 Market Street. Free. Info: www.burgwinwrighthouse.com

5/6 & 20 Story Hour
11 a.m. – 12 p.m. Miss Shannon leads an interactive event for kids ages 3 to 6. The morning opens with a picture book and ends with a project or activity, and includes time to play, learn, and laugh. Each child should bring a participating adult. Admission: Free. Main Library, 201 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6303 or www.nhclibrary.org.

5/7 Blessing of the Pets
4 – 5 p.m. Bring your pet for this outdoor blessing service. Harbor United Methodist Church, 4853 Masonboro Loop Road, Wilmington.

5/7 Flower Crown Workshop
1 p.m. Learn to make a flower crown of fresh flora like a professional with Kristy Carr Holt from Eco Chic Blossoms. Tickets: $35 or $40 day-of (includes materials and mimosas). Terra sol sanctuary, 507 Castle Street, Wilmington. Info: www.terrasol-sanctuary.com

5/8 Prologue
7 p.m. Join Ben Steelman for his book program "Prologue" talking with former Wilmington resident Ellyn Bache (*Safe Passage*), about her new book *Kaleidoscope*, a collection of her stories primarily from women's magazines in the 1980s and '90s in the heyday of fiction. M.C. Erny Gallery at the WHQR studios, 254 North Front Street. (third floor). Free.

5/9 Over 50s Dance
7:30 – 10 p.m. Kick off your shoes and hit the dance floor to DJ Dan Chop's picks. Brief dance lesson at 7:30 p.m. and free form after 8 p.m. Entry: $8 per person. New Hanover County Senior Resource Center, 2222 So. College Road, Wilmington. Info: overfiftiesdanceclub.org

5/11 Arsenio Hall Live
7:30 p.m. Live comedy performance by the versatile actor, comedian and producer Arsenio Hall to close Thalian Hall's Legions & Main Attractions Season. Admission: $55–75. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

5/12-14 North Brunswick Newcomers
9:30 a.m. New to the other side of the bridge? Join us for a meet and greet. Presentations from Don Harty, owner of Mahanaim Adventures, and Dan Brawley, executive director of Cucalorus Film Festival. Leland Cultural Arts Center at 1212 Magnolia Village Way, Leland. Info: www.nbnewcomers.org

5/11–14 Yoga Teacher Training
9 a.m. – 6 p.m. Learn to integrate mind, body, and spirit through creative, strong, vinyasa flow practices. Admission: $550–600. Wilmington Yoga Center, 5329 Oleander Drive, Suite 200, Wilmington. Info: (910) 350-0234 or wilmington-yogacenter.com.

5/11–14 Wine & Food Festival
6:30 (Thursday); 6:30 – 9:30 p.m (Friday); 2 – 5 p.m. (Saturday); 1 – 4 p.m. (Sunday). Enjoy a very VIP "Toast of the Town" on opening night, a "Bourbon & BBQ cocktail party," big hats and all, on Friday, or buy a three-day pass and enjoy "Corks & Forks Grand Tasting" on Saturday and "Bubbles Brews & Street Easts" on Sunday, too. This epicurean festival hosted by Bellamy Mansion is well worth the cost of admission. It features samples of wine and beer, plus tasty bites from local restaurants, caterers and food trucks. Tickets: Vary per event or $60 for three-day pass. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 202-4749 or www.wilmingtonwine-andfood.com.

5/13 Metropolitan Opera Live
12:30 – 5:30 p.m. Osher Lifelong Learning Institute presents Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, conducted by Sebastian Weigle. Renee Fleming stars in her first North American performance as Octavian, the impulsive young title character. Admission: $20–24. UNCW Lumina Theater, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3195 or www.uncw.edu/olli/metopera.html.

5/13 Battleship Program
1 – 4 p.m. Showboat: System & Design. Listen to a presenta-

tion by Lt. Colonel Ken Rittenmeyer (USAF Retired) followed by two hours of exploring the shipboard with explanations of shipboard systems such as armor, fuel, propulsion and more. Admission: $35–40. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

5/15 Book Talk

7:30 p.m. Talk with John Batchelor, author of the cookbook *Chefs of the Coast*. Batchelor will talk about his research in compiling the book and how North Carolina's coastal cuisine is unique. Admission: Free. Federal Point History Center, 1121A North Lake Park Boulevard, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-0502 or www.federalpointhistory.org.

5/14 Mother's Day Concert

4 – 6p.m. Wilmington Choral Society presents "A Dozen Roses: Honoring our Mothers," the finale for their concert season. Perfect for a post-Mother's Day brunch concert. Tickets: $16 (Adult) $9 (Children under 17). Wilson Center, 703 North third Street, Wilmington. www.capefearstage.com

5/16 Rush Hour Concert

5:30 p.m. Live performance by Justin Cody Fox, a local singer, songwriter and guitarist who gained notoriety for his guitar skills at the age of 15. Justin has written and recorded multiple albums as well as shared the stage with Vince Neil, David Lee Roth, Lynyrd Skynyrd and more. Admission: $5–10. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or uncw.edu/presents/rushhour.html.

5/17 Youth Program

3 – 3:45 p.m. Lifeguards! Bathing Suits! Safety! Listen to a lifeguard talk about her job and safety at the beach. Make an old-fashioned bathing suit and a "sandy" snack. Admission: Free. Wrightsville Beach, 303 West Salisbury Street, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-2569 or wbmuseumofhistory.com.

5/17 Birding and Kayak Adventure

9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Join Wild Bird & Garden and Mahanaim Adventures for a great morning of paddling and birding out on our local waters near Masonboro Island. Excursions: $45 each, including all equipment and guide services. All skill levels welcome, double or single kayaks available. Pre-registration required. Info: (910) 547-8252 or www.mahanaimadventures.com

5/17–20 Cape Fear Comedy Festival

Four-day independently run live comedy festival featuring stand-up, sketch and improve performances by comedians from all over the U.S. and Canada. See website for schedule and venue details. Info: (910) 409-1262 or capefearcomedy.com.

5/18 Wilma Dash

6:30 p.m. All-female 5K hosted by *Wilma* magazine. Health Fest and after party to follow featuring food, drinks, music, health screenings, fitness assessments and awards. Admission: $35–50. Proceeds benefit the Pretty in Pink Foundation. Coastline Convention Center, 503 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 302-4393 or its-go-time.com/Wilma-dash.

5/18–28 Live Theatre

7:30 p.m. (Thursday – Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). Thalian Association presents *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, following the aging Big Daddy and Big Mama. As their son Brick and his beautiful but sexually frustrated wife Maggie scramble to secure their part of Big Daddy's Estate, troubled relationships come to a stormy climax and a shockwave of secrets is revealed. Admission: $15–30. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

5/19–21 Rims on the River

Schedule available online. Vintage car, hot rod and motorcycle show featuring live entertainment, pre-show parties, vendor exhibits, a cruise day and awards. Admission: $10–15 to exhibit. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: www.rimsontheriver.com.

5/19–21 Seaglass Salvage Market

9 a.m. – 3 p.m. (Friday); 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Saturday). Once a month indoor/outdoor market filled with up cycled, recycled and repurposed furniture and home décor items, salvage pieces perfect for DIY projects, yard and garden décor, jewelry and local honey. Admission: Free. 1987 Andrew Jackson Highway (Hwy 74/76), Leland. Info: www.seaglasssalvagemarket.com.

5/20 N.C. Wrestling Championship

10 a.m. –4 p.m. USA Beach and Belt wrestling championship returns to Carolina Beach for a fierce competition. . . on the beach! Wrestlers in different age groups will compete for national titles and the chance to join Team USA in the world championships. Info: www.ncwrestling.org

5/20 Battleship Alive

8 a.m. – 5 p.m. A chance to interact with World War II Living History Re-enactors performing daily duties and common drills on the battleship. Admission: $6–14. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

5/20 Raise the Barn

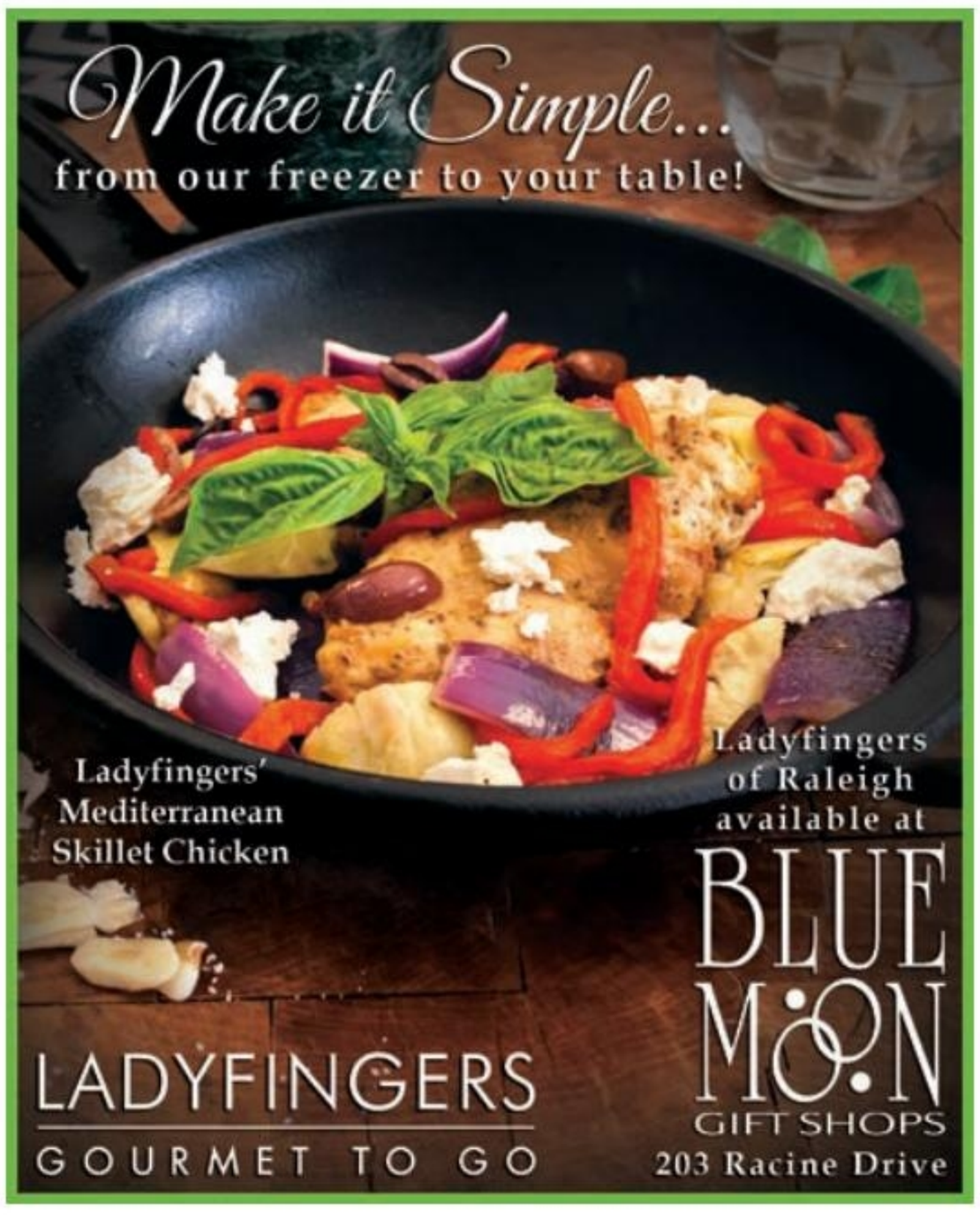
6 p.m. Join Feast Down East for the farm-to-table event of the year featuring locally sourced food prepared by some of the area's best chefs. Event features live music and a silent auction. Funds raised support the non-profit work of Feast Down East. NHC Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.feastdowneast.org/raise-the-barn.

5/20 Crawl for Paws

4 – 11 p.m. Pub crawl to help raise funds for the Carolina Beach Police Department K9 unit and other local animal charities. Various pubs in Carolina Beach. Info: www.crawlforpaws.com.

5/26 Fourth Friday

6 – 9 p.m. Downtown galleries, studios and art spaces open their doors to the public in an after-hours celebration of art and



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Memorial Day Observance

5/29

culture. Admission: Free. Various venues in Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.

5/26 Art Opening & Reception
6 – 9 p.m. Artist Janette K Hopper opens a show of paintings, "Natural Milieu," expresses her love of the forest and the sea. The show combines paintings, projections, multimedia prints, and sounds to transplant the observer into total experience. CFCC Wilma Daniels Gallery, 200 Hanover Street. www.janettekhopper.com. Free.

5/27 & 28 Orange Street Arts Fest
10 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Saturday); 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Sunday). Downtown arts festival showcasing a variety of local art and artists with exhibitors, art show and sale, demonstrations, food vendors and live entertainment. Admission: Free. Second & Orange Streets, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtoncommunityarts.org.

5/27 4th Annual Raider Ball
6 – 11p.m. Prepare to be transported back to the 1940s as you dance the night away on the historic USS North Carolina in downtown Wilmington and honor our fallen marines. Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres included in ticket. 1940s dress suggested. Tickets: $65–80. Aboard the USS North Carolina Battleship, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: www.raisingraiders.org.

5/28 Carolina Beach Farmers Market
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Outdoor "island-style" market featuring live music and local growers, producers and artisans selling fresh local produce, wines meats, baked goods, herbal products and handmade crafts. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Highway 421 & Atlanta Avenue, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-2977 or www.carolinabeachfarmersmarket.com.

5/29 Memorial Day Observance
5:45 – 6:30 p.m. Observance held to remember those who gave their lives in service. Features military musical arrangements by an Armed Forces Band, 21-gun salute, and the executive director of the Battleship NC, Captain Terry A. Bragg. Admission: Free. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

5/31 – 6/3 Blue Marlin Tournament
3 – 10 p.m. (Wednesday); 8:30 a.m. – 8 p.m. (Thursday – Saturday). Annual fishing tournament including an open captain's party, mid-tournament party at the gazebo, and closing awards ceremony with food, live music and open bar. Wrightsville Beach Marina, 6 Marina Street, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 262-5566 or www.capefearbluemarlintournament.com.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday Wrightsville Farmers Market
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside beach market offering a variety of fresh, locally grown produce, baked goods, plants and unique arts and

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Save the Date

We're excited to announce the date and location of mfgCON 2017. The event will take place September 19–20 at the Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem, NC. This year's agenda will be packed with breakthrough moments and inspiring stories from peer organizations that can help you tackle your toughest manufacturing challenges.

Why Attend?

The conference offers a specialized manufacturing curriculum with more than 24 highly curated sessions featuring expert speakers and real-world case studies from your fellow NCMEP colleagues, plus four keynote presentations.

What's New?

This year, we are adding a Meet-the-Experts program. Conference attendees can schedule and meet one-on-one with top NCMEP subject matter experts to discuss strategies/issues related to the manufacturing environment. Get access to the brains behind our solutions and services.

Curriculum

This year's tracks focus on solutions in four key areas: Talent Development, Emerging Technologies and Innovation, Leadership and Culture, and Business Growth.

NCMEP

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crafts. Opens 5/15. Seawater Lane, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7925 or www.townofwrightsvillebeach.com.

Monday – Wednesday — Cinematique Films
7 p.m. Independent, classic and foreign films screened in historic Thalian Hall. Check online for updated listings and special screenings. Admission: $7. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

Tuesday — Wine Tasting
6 – 8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus wine and small plate specials all night. Admission: Free. The Fortunate Glass, 29 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fortunateglasswinebar.com.

Tuesday — Cape Fear Blues Jam
8 p.m. A unique gathering of the area's finest blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. No cover charge. The Rusty Nail, 1310 South Fifth Avenue. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Wednesday — Ogden Farmers Market
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Local farmers, producers and artisans sell fresh fruits, veggies, plants, eggs, cheese, meat, honey, baked goods, wine, bath products and more. Ogden Park, 615 Ogden Park Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtonandbeaches.com/events-calendar/ogden-farmers-market.

Wednesday — Poplar Grove Farmers Market
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. (Wednesday); 3–7 p.m. (Thursday). Open-air market held on the front lawn of historic Poplar Grove Plantation offering fresh produce, plants, herbs, baked goods and handmade artisan crafts. Opens 4/19. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 US Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.poplargrove.org/farmers-market.

Wednesday — T'ai Chi at CAM
12:30 – 1:30 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Wednesday — Wednesday Echo
7:30 – 11:30 p.m. Weekly singer/songwriter open mic night that welcomes all genres of music. Each person will have 3–6 songs. Palm Room, 11 East Salisbury Street, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 509-3040.

Thursday — Yoga at the CAM
12 – 1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. Sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Friday & Saturday — Dinner Theatre
7 p.m. TheatreNOW presents Ivan Menchell's *The Cemetery Club*, a comedy/drama about three friends in their mid-to-late 50s who live in the same Jewish community in Pittsburgh and become widows. Runs from 5/5–27. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3now or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Saturday — Riverfront Farmers Market
8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market featuring local farmers, producers, artisans, crafters and live music along the banks of the Cape Fear River. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtondowntown.com/events/farmers-market.

Sunday — Bluewater Waterfront Music
4 – 7 p.m. Summer concerts on the waterfront patio. Band schedule available online. Admission: Free. Bluewater Waterfront Grill, 4 Marina Street, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-8500 or www.bluewaterdining.com.

To add a calendar event, please contact calendar@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted by the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

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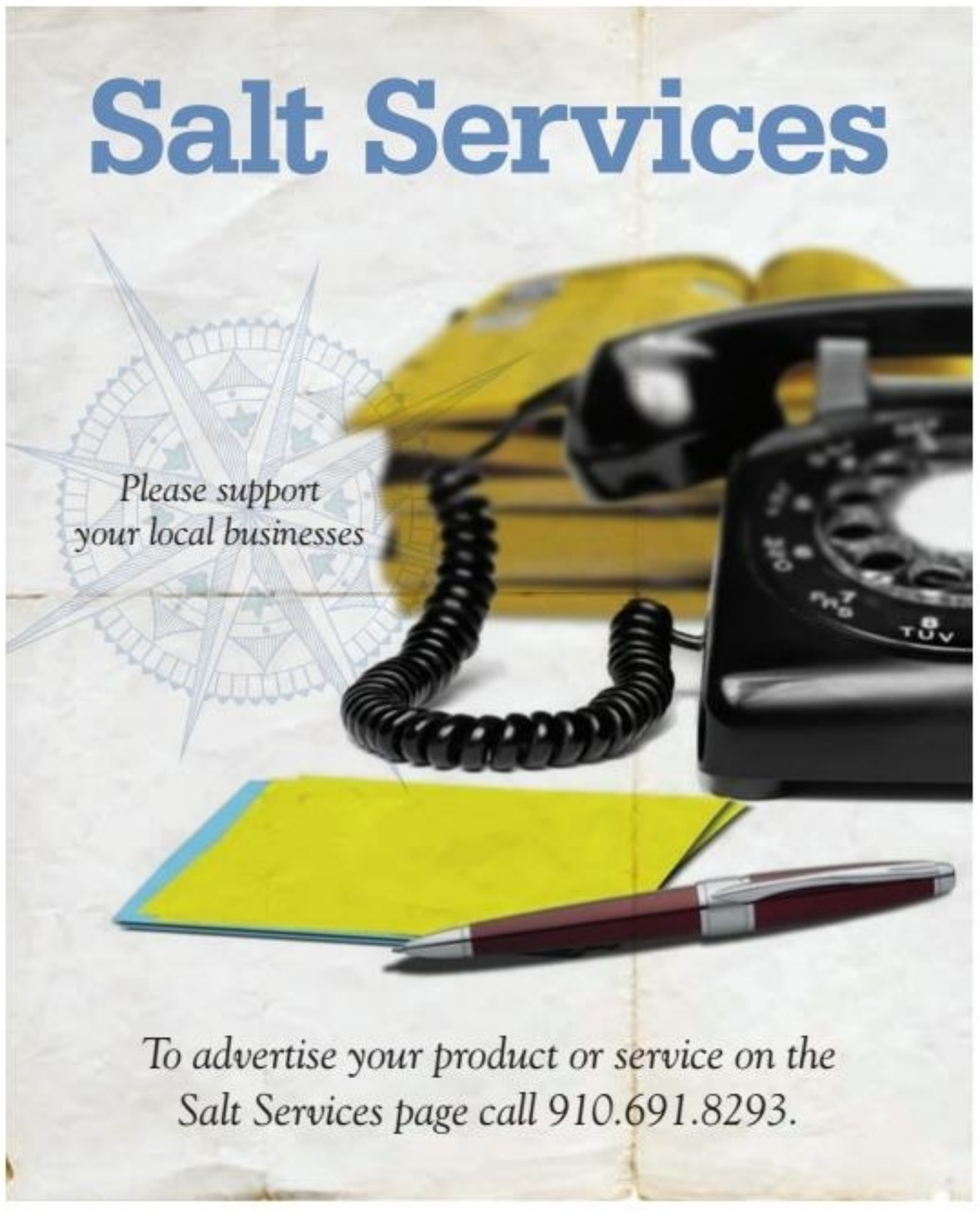
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Port City People

Roast on the Coast

Hilton Riverside Hotel

Saturday, March 11, 2017

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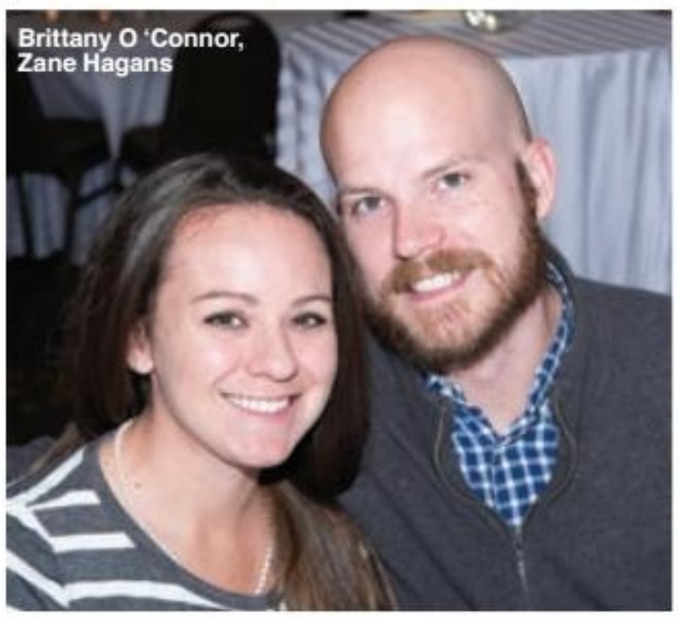
Elizabeth & Eddie Seijo, Pam Edens, Jessica Glenn, Aubrey Edens

Ross Rowan, Melissa Middlebrook

Amy Underwood, Megan Siragusa

Kendi & Clay Haywood, Jenna & Steven Wells

Stephen & Charles MacIntyre


Brittany O 'Connor, Zane Hagans

Kate Wooslo, Diane Nguyen, Paula Charbonnet

Blair Bunting, Allison Murray, Louise Northington

Evan Rhodes, Giulie Bilzi, Spencer Lem

Sarah Wilson, Sarah Nunnally, Megan Marles

Will & Jen Darrough

Port City People

Waves of Hope - A Blue Tie Gala

Audi Cape Fear

Saturday, March 11, 2017

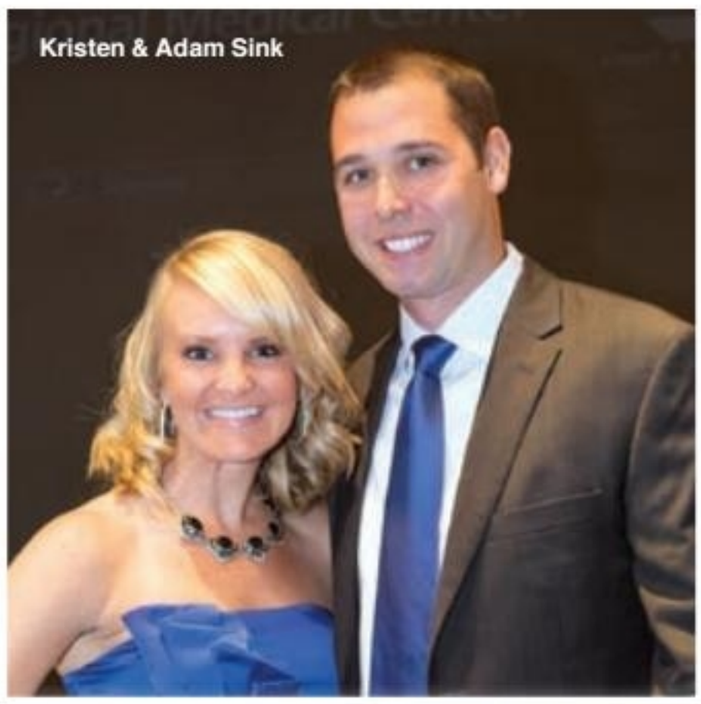
Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Steve & Melissa Peterson, Amanda & John Culotta

Renee Mangum, Mary-Hannah Evans, Chris & Kristin Hufham

Louis & Tami Natoi, Mike & Oz Nichols

Dr. Heather & Dr. Michael Favorito, Dr. Matthew & Christine Sincock



Kristen & Adam Sink

Somya & Joe Navejar

Germaine & Henry Colon

Phillip Harris, Jennifer Martling

Mary & Rick Andrews

Trent & Connie Gattis

Justin & Jennifer Russo

Krista Wilson, Lee Hester

Port City People

Pink Ribbon Cocktail Party & Celebration

Hilton Wilmington Riverside

Friday, March 17, 2017

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

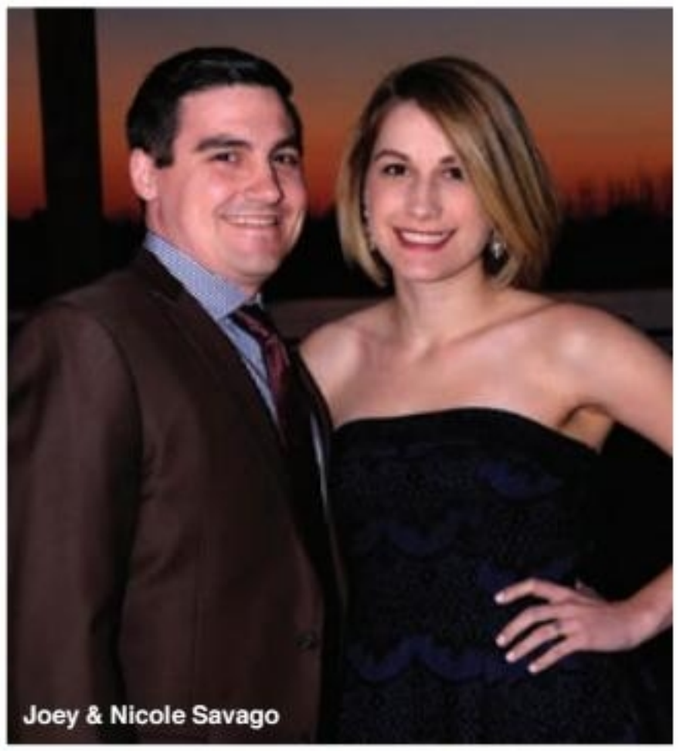
Dan & Stephanie Bloodworth

Daniel Wilson, Melissa Fallis, Joe & Denise Szaloki, Laurel & Will Shambley

Michele Gowdy, Linda Bruckner

Reid Hobbs, Sandie Orsa

Dr. John & Kathy Black, Paul & Dr. Kendall Yokobidis, Dr. Andrew Hall


Joey & Nicole Savago

Lisa & Joey Cheramie

Cassie Harris, Chris & Kristin Hufham

Sandy Spiers, Pam Gonzalez, Lindsay Harkey

Vanessa Hansen, Sara Nunnally, Brittany Rhodenhiser, Colby Saucier

Jeff & Michelle Turner

Schorr Davis, Claire Parker

Maybe Baby

For Taurus, golden days are ahead

By Astrid Stellanova

May means in Taurus-speak, maybe, or maybe not. Taurus, we know better than to pull your tail and enrage the hothead in you. Friends know you as surprisingly sunny and funny when unprovoked. Shakespeare, Queen Elizabeth II, Adele, George Clooney, Tina Fey, all share the sign of Taurus, and none of them seems too ill-tempered, right? —Ad Astra, Astrid

Taurus (April 20–May 20)
If anybody crosses somebody in your camp, you're liable to burn their house down, eat the provisions and take their mule. You are a fierce adversary, Sugar, with a fierce sweet tooth, right? But there is the other side, all generous and loving, and when that side shines, everybody wants to stand in your golden light. This is the reason you collect friends — and enemies — like nobody's business. Speaking of which, a business opportunity opens in due time. You have every reason to give it a very good look.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)
This month is Willy Wonka fun and crazy for you. Find the wild child in you to go with it and play. The fact that you finally made it into the candy factory says a lot about just how tenacious you are. You earned your pass and then some. The month you are going to have is one you have longed for, Honey.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)
Last month's shenanigans left you a little sheepish and secretly ashamed. Get over it, Sweet Thing. You may have gone to the extremes, but there ain't no reason you can't reboot and move on. You paid to play, and nobody had more fun than you did. BTW: Brace yourself for an unexpected love to surface.

Leo (July 23–August 22)
Two days this month will reveal aspects of your abilities and talents that you have denied or suppressed. If you can just go with the flow, these talents will lead you to unexpected outcomes offering a brand-new vocational choice. Pay extra attention to the number 4 for additional clues — and don't argue so dang much.

Virgo (August 23–September 22)
There is either a good time or a good story this month for Virgo. When you stop muddling over something long past, you will find the traction to move forward. The fact that it is over is something you ain't quite accepted yet. Sugar, the past is as stale as an old doughnut, but the present is where your true joy lies.

Libra (September 23–October 22)
The past month was a doozy, and you felt like a wing-walker with a drunk pilot at the controls. This is a time of trusting in yourself and waving bye-bye to the ding-dong person formerly in charge of your destiny. You are the pilot of your life, Sweet Thing. You don't have to do aerial tricks to prove it, either.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
It was sweeter than a bite of a hot buttered biscuit drizzled with honey just to watch the face of a rival fall behind as you roared to the front, wasn't it? You have pulled way ahead, but they ain't giving up quite so easy. It might pay off for you to form a peaceful pact with them, or else spend the rest of the year playing a mean game of tag.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
You've dodged a few bullets this year. Beginning to face that maybe careless and reckless ain't just your driving traits? Now, settle down and cogitate. Let the lessons and the luck sink in, Sugar. It is fun to be one step ahead of trouble,
Twinkle Toes, but it might detract from more important work you have yet to do.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
Recent events have confirmed your latest inspirations were a success, and some powerful folks are about to bet on you and your newest ideas. If you were a horse, you would give Seattle Slew a run for the money. All signs point to your standing in the winning circle, Honey Bun. Bow, smile and say thank you.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
In the past, you let one close to you dictate the terms of your life, right down to who, what, where and how things would go down. Have you noticed how wrong they were about what worked for you? Fire their fool self. You are in a unique situation, Honey Bunny, to reposition your life and your happiness.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
When you got right down to it, you immediately figured out what you needed. That wasn't so hard was it? Now you have won the admiration of someone who could use your past experience. Pay it forward. Give this person the benefit of what you know. Your lives intersected for a good reason, Sugar.

Aries (March 21–April 19)
By garaging your three-horsepower moped, you have found the peace and quiet you didn't know you needed. As entertaining as it was to watch you roar around town in a ball cap and gray pantyhose, it seems about time you embraced your serious side. You are going to need it. There is a real challenge ahead, Darling. You are up to it.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

Continued from page 96

square — a channel marker! The iPhone flashlight is not lighting the water ahead but is reflecting off a channel marker.

I see on the satellite map that I've drifted right — far right.

Most boats have what's called a whisky compass, an erratic compass that floats in liquid, and is only roughly accurate, especially if there are waves. By this compass, I see that I'm heading almost north and need a 10-degree correction or so to the west.

That blinding light. It's closer. And closer. I can see it's a very large boat. Will it miss me? I maneuver to the right. It passes to my left. It's gigantic. It has no thoughts of slowing down. The wake tosses me way up and way down. I'm in idle, waiting for the wake to pass. I say ugly things.

The wake recedes, and I slowly crawl north — checking satellite map, flashlight up, watching for channel markers, etc.

Nearing my destination, I realize I have no clear landmarks for my friend's dock. My friend's pier is one among many exactly like it. I've never docked there (or anywhere else) at night.

My wife and daughter are supposed to be waiting at that dock. They've probably been there a while. I phone them. My daughter answers. "What's taking you so long, Daddy?"

"Oh, nothing. Just taking my time. No need to rush. Nice night. Is Mama there?"

"Sure. Here she is."

My wife asks, "What's taking so long, Honey?"

"Oh, nothing. Just taking my time. Nice night out here. Need to be careful, though. Would you do me a favor?"

"Sure."

"Are you on the dock?"

"Yes."

"Would you turn on your phone flashlight and wave it over your head? With the light shining out toward me?"

"Sure. Where are you?"

"I'm not altogether sure . . . would you turn on the flashlight and wave it over your head?"

"OK."

"Oh, good," I say. "I see you." Then I realize she can't hear me because her phone is over her head, going back and forth in the air.

In a few minutes, I dock safely, step off the boat, and my wife asks, "How was the trip?"

"Fine," I say, holding onto a single sliver of pride deep in my soul. I don't know where to start.

"Wasn't it pretty dark out there?"

"Damn dark."

Clyde Edgerton is the author of 10 novels, a memoir and most recently, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

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Dark Night

A simple boat trip can test a man's pride and his night vision

By Clyde Edgerton

One evening a few weeks ago, I left Gibby's Dock and Dine in Carolina Beach, just off the Intracoastal Waterway. It was 7 p.m., dark, and I was in a motorboat alone, heading 15 miles north to a friend's dock on Wrightsville Beach. My wife and daughter had just left Gibby's in an automobile and would be waiting for me at my destination. I was hoping to impress my wife (and myself) with how quickly I could get to Wrightsville Beach. I'd planned to leave before dark but time had slipped away.

Well, yes, we could have left the boat and come back for it the next day. But . . . come on, a little night trip up the waterway? What could be difficult about that? (Not being able to see, for one thing, Captain Ahab.)

I'd be heading north, right? With land to my right and left? And surely there'd be enough light to see ahead in the dark — not far, but far enough. It's a straight shot. I'd simply stay in the middle of the waterway and thus avoid the crab pot buoys. The channel markers would all have red and green lights, right? It wouldn't be that dark.

Before I know it, I'm disoriented. Yes, there are house lights off to my left, to the west along the waterway, and I'm confident that there is an eastern bank to my right — somewhere — but the rest of the world is inked over. Inked in, inked out. Then I see a green light far ahead — a channel marker. It seems extraordinarily far away. The water is less calm than I'd remembered on the trip down that afternoon in full, bright, beautiful daylight.

And coming toward me, from way far up north, is a light brighter than any train headlight I've ever seen. Or is it stationary? And it's not just one bright light — it's a cluster of lights together like a sunflower, like a white, nighttime sun. It has killed any night vision I might have. I put my hand up to block it out.

I calmly think about the worst thing that can happen.

I can die. But worse: I may have to confess stupidity.

Boat owners know about the safety cord running from near the throttle that you can clip to a belt loop so that if you fall overboard the attached cord will pull a small button off a small knob and cause the boat engine to cut off so that the boat will not run away. I've never hooked it up.

I hook it up.

Where the hell am I? . . . I mean, in reference to the shoreline?

I turn loose the wheel, pull out my phone, keeping a hand up to block the bright light. I touch to open the Maps app with GPS but my screen is blocked by a white box asking if I want to join any of several Wi-Fi servers. I cancel that, worried again about my night vision, then I see the waterway on the iPhone screen and a small blue dot that is my position. Aha. I look up. What? At my one o'clock position is a string of lights sitting on the water. . . is that a very long, low boat? How could that be?

It's a boat dock! How can it be ahead and to my right on the barrier island side? The shore with houses is to my left. There are no boat docks on the back side of Masonboro Island. I turn the boat to get around this phantom dock. I've drifted way left it seems. How? What's going on?

The blinding bright light is getting larger. And higher. Yep, it's coming for me. I need to be to the right of that dock, and to the right of the blinding bright light headed my way, but how? And what about the crab pot buoys? No way I can see one of those. I should be out in the middle. I check the blue dot on my map. Confirmed. I'm too far left, or west. I change my heading significantly to the right, east.

Suddenly, I remember that the satellite choice on the GPS should show photos of the boat docks. The plain map doesn't. Another Wi-Fi request blocks my screen. My left hand blocks the blinding bright light. I have no night vision. I grab the wheel and find the satellite map. I press it and wait. The screen slowly fills in.

Ah, there's my little blue dot in the Intracoastal Waterway. The satellite map shows shallow and deep areas in the water. Cool. It shows boat docks. Cool. If I just had a flashlight to see ahead in the water. Is there one on the boat somewhere?

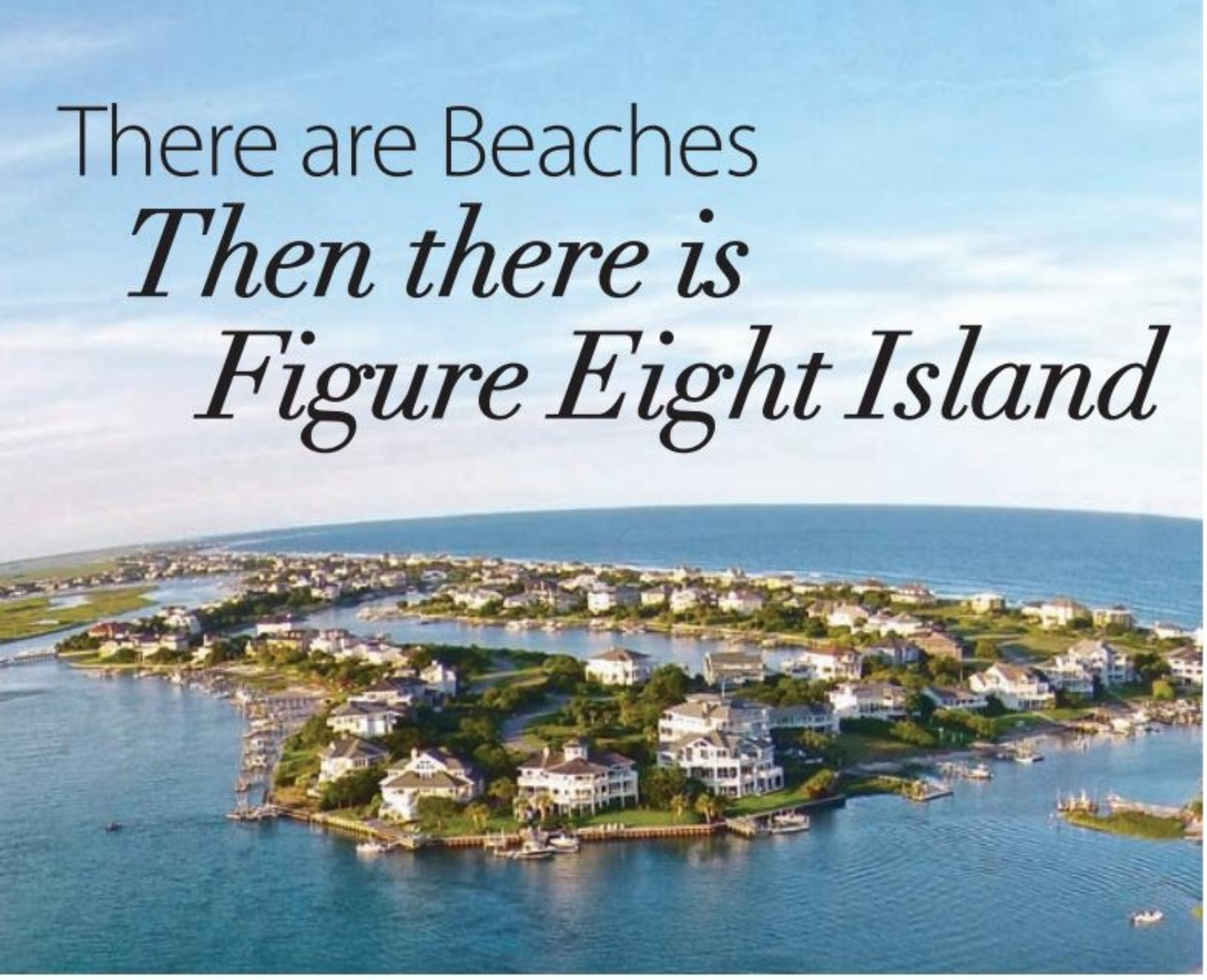
Or on the iPhone? Yes. I turn it on. Better to have an iPhone than a Swiss Army knife right now. I hold the phone high overhead to try to light the water over the bow and watch the map. My left hand is back up, blocking the bright ship headlight. I lean against the wheel to steer with my body somehow. Lo and behold about 50 feet straight ahead is a green reflecting

Continued on page 95

ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY BLAIR

There are Beaches

Then there is Figure Eight Island



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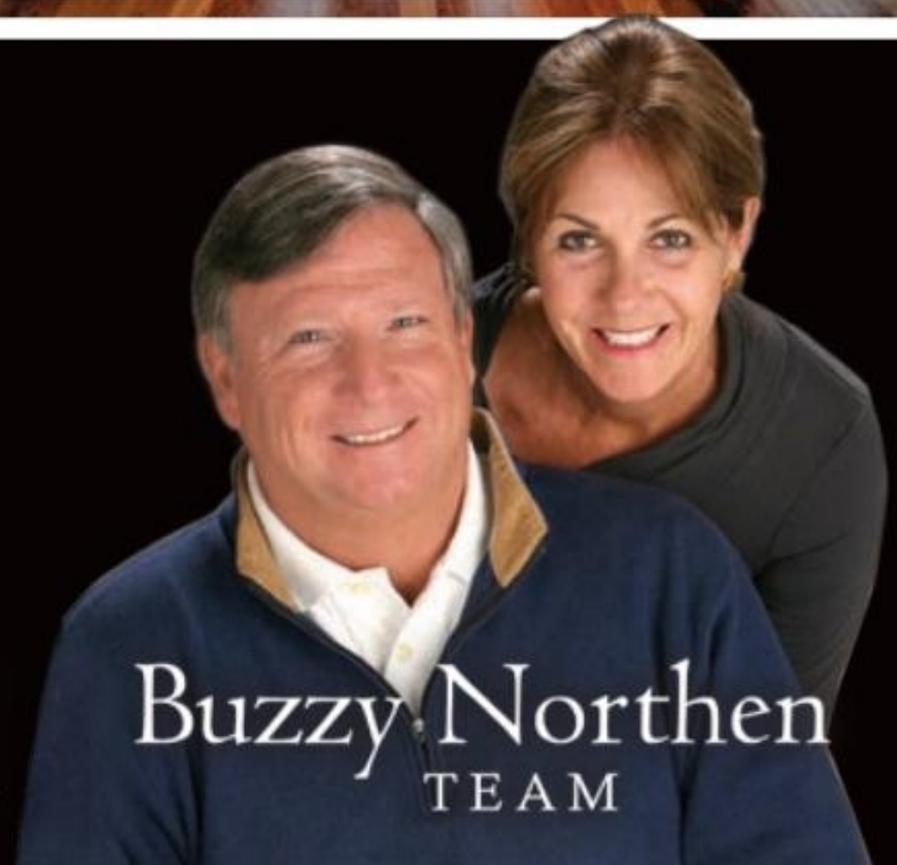

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